

# MLRI Training: SNAP 3 Month Time Limit

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# Agenda

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Overview
History
Exemptions
DTA notices
How to keep SNAP
Advocacy tips
Resources



Please ask  
questions in  
the chat as  
they come up!

# High-level overview

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- ABAWD = “Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents”
  - Certain adults ages 18-54 (until 55th birthday), who *based on DTA screening are not exempt*
  - If DTA determined not exempt - Can only get 3 months of SNAP until Jan 1, 2027 unless:
    - Exempt, or
    - Meeting the Work Rules

# History of the time limit in MA

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1996	Great Recession	Jan. 2016-Feb. 2020	March 2020	June 2023	May-August 2025
<b>Welfare Reform:</b> Congress created time limit.	<b>Suspended</b> during Great Recession.	<b>Time limit in place.</b>	<b>Suspended nationwide</b> due to COVID-19 pandemic.	<b>Fiscal Responsibility Act:</b> Congress adds ages 50-54 & exemption for unhoused, vets, former foster youth.	<b>Time limit re-starts May 1.</b> On August 1 terminations will start.

## What's wrong with the time limit?

- ✗ Takes food away from vulnerable unemployed/underemployed adults
- ✗ Risk of termination even if exempt
- ✗ Ignores systemic barriers in labor market
- ✗ Red tape/burden both clients & state
- ✗ Increases hunger/poverty for ABAWD & other household members

# ABAWD Work Rules: The Basics

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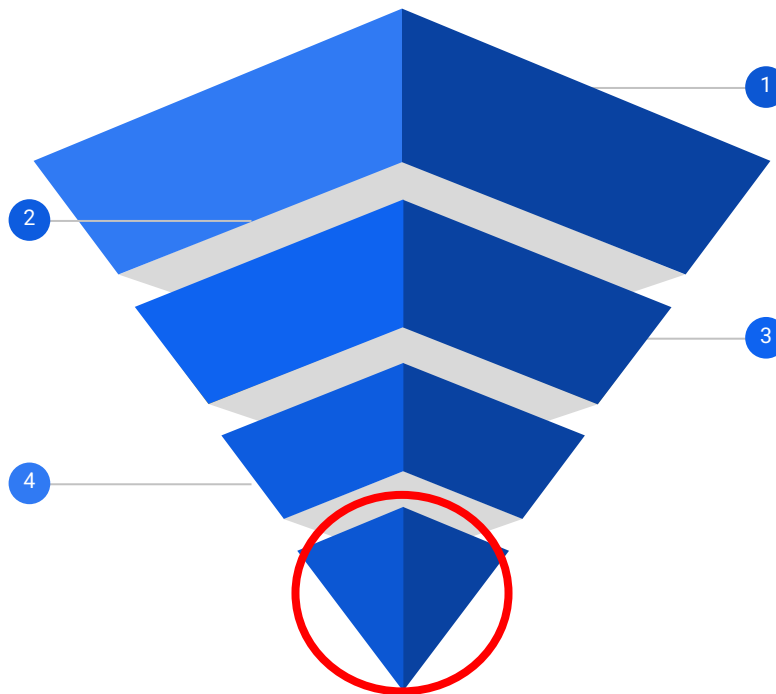
- On May 1, DTA re-starts 3 month clock.
  - Become subject on a rolling basis.
  - **NO** terminations due to 3-month clock before August 1.
  - 3 *full* SNAP benefit months until Jan. 1, 2027 (don't need to be consecutive).
- Some areas with elevated rates of unemployment waived.
- DTA must screen for *all* exemptions *before* starting the 3-month clock.
  - ***MANY people are exempt!***
- Can meet with work and/or DTA education program, or community service.

## DTA screening shrinks this group further

Applies exemptions to many adults

## 3 month ticking clock

Tell DTA exempt or meeting the rules to keep SNAP after 3 months.



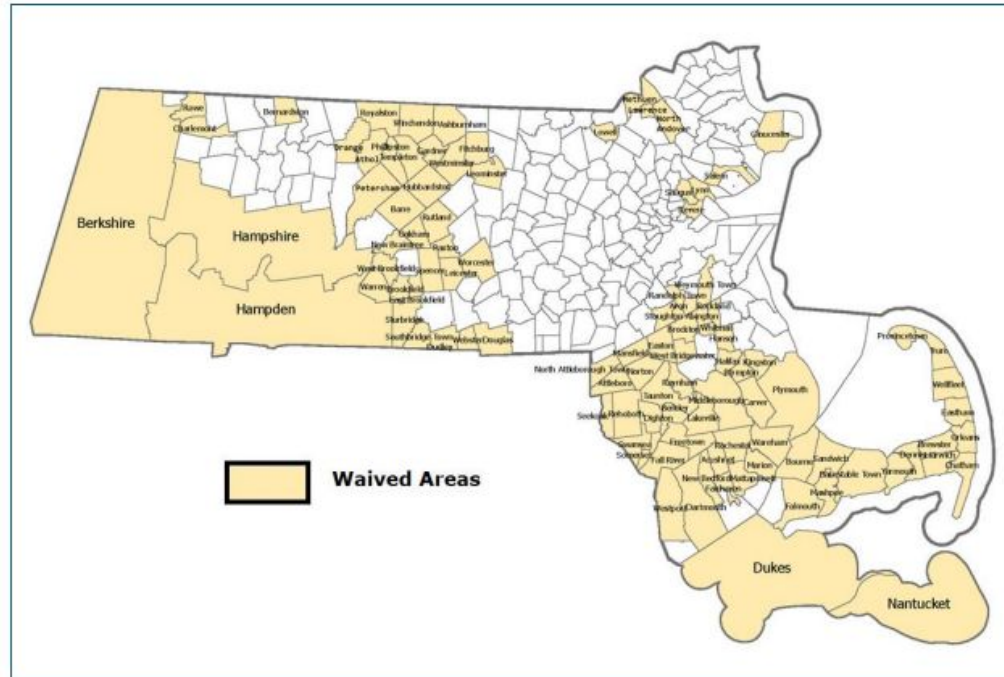
## Before screening: all adults 18-54 who are...

not getting disability benefit or SNAP with kids, or living in a waived area.

## DTA sends *SNAP and Work* notice

This notice - if it includes the ABAWD Work Rules - tells ABAWD(s) 3 month clock is starting.

## Areas waived until July 1, 2025





# QUESTIONS?

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# Who is exempt?

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# Exemptions

<b><i>Age and Family Status</i></b>	Under 18 or 55 or older
	In a household with a child under 18 years old
	Caring for a person with disabilities or child under 6 years old, even if not living together
<b><i>Housing Situation</i></b>	Homeless
	At imminent risk of homelessness

# Exemptions

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<b><i>Employment and Income</i></b>	Earning \$217.50 or more/week (working at least 14.5 hours/week at \$15/hour).  Or, if earning less than minimum wage, working 30+ hours/week.
	Applied for or getting <a href="#">unemployment benefits</a>
<b><i>Education and Training</i></b>	In any recognized school, training program, or college program (enrolled at least half time)

# Exemptions

<b>Health</b>	Pregnant
	Have a hard time working or can't work at least 20 hours/week due to short or long term health reasons (mental or physical)
	Getting disability benefit (e.g. SSI, SSDI, EAEDC, worker's comp, short term disability)
	MassAbility participant (formerly Mass Rehab Commission)
	In substance use treatment program

# Exemptions

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<b><i>Veteran</i></b>	Served in any branch, regardless of discharge
<b><i>Formerly in Foster Care</i></b>	Was in foster care on or after turned 18 & currently under 25
<b><i>Domestic Violence</i></b>	Domestic violence/intimate partner violence with safety concerns that impact ability to work

# Examples: Homeless

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## Homeless - EXEMPT!

- Maria, 19, couch-surfing after parents kicked her out.
- Jamie, 54, staying in a homeless shelter.
- Sabine, 40, sleeping in a tent.

## At risk of homelessness - EXEMPT!

- Fernando, 36, got eviction notice.
- Lane, 27, informally paying a friend to stay in their spare bedroom. Friend said they have to leave in 30 days.
- Manny, 45, and his wife Mary, 48, had a fire in their apartment and could only afford a short term rental for 2 months. They are at risk of homelessness in a couple of weeks.

# Examples: Health reasons

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## **Mental health - EXEMPT!**

- Mark, 48, struggles to keep jobs and work enough hours because of his mental health. He is diagnosed with bipolar disorder and is working on a treatment and medication plan with his psychiatrist. He is exempt.
- Francesca, 20, can't work more than a few hours each week due to severe PTSD and anxiety. She is exempt.

## **Physical health - EXEMPT!**

- Cady, 35, was in a serious car accident and had numerous surgeries to set broken bones. Her doctor said she can't work while she is healing.
- Felipe, 38, was a roofer, but fell and broke his back. He applied for disability but hasn't been approved yet. He can't work.



# Examples: Former foster youth

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## Lived in MA when turned 18

- Cynthia, 23, was in DCF custody when she turned 18. She was staying with friends and not in a foster home at the time, but DCF was still legally responsible for her.
- Cynthia stayed in DCF care until she was 20.
- *Cynthia is exempt!*

## Lived in another state when turned 18

- Marshall, 22, was living with their foster parents in New York when they turned 18.
- At age 21 Marshall moved to MA.
- *Marshall is exempt!*

# How to tell DTA

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- **Check *all* exemptions for every ABAWD!** Life changes & DTA makes mistakes
  - ◆ [MLRI ABAWD Guide](#) - how to ask about each exemption
- **Tell DTA as soon as possible about any exemption:**
  - ◆ Call (877) 382-2363
  - ◆ Go to a local DTA office
  - ◆ Send written, signed statement explaining the exemption:
    - Online on DTACConnect.com or on the DTA Connect mobile app.
    - By mail: DTA Document Processing Center, P.O. Box 4406, Taunton, MA 02780-0420
    - By fax: (617) 887-8765
  - ◆ If exempt based on income, send DTA proof. Otherwise, DTA will follow up if they need any proof.

# QUESTIONS?

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# How to know if an adult has to meet the Work Rules - DTA notices

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# SNAP and Work Notice

LAURA PALMER  
C/O DALE COOPER  
100 MAIN STREET  
ANYTOWN, MA 11111-1111

Agency ID: 9999999  
Date: 99/99/9999

For Your Information  
**SNAP and Work: Rules You Must Follow**

Dear LAURA PALMER,

You and/or other people you get SNAP with must meet the work rules for SNAP. Different people in the SNAP household may need to follow different work rules: Please see the table below. This letter tells each of you what you need to do. **If you do not follow these rules, your SNAP benefits may decrease or end.**

Name:	Work rules they must meet:	Start Date:
LAURA PALMER	General Work Rules	99/99/9999
DONNA HAYWARD	ABAWD Work Rules	99/99/9999

For a video explanation of these rules, visit [www.mass.gov/snapworkrules](http://www.mass.gov/snapworkrules).

Exemptions	
You do not have to follow the General Work Rules if you:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Are certified as disabled by Social Security or MassHealth.</li><li>Have a hard time working because of physical or mental health issues.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Earn \$217.50 per week (before taxes) or make less than this but work 30 or more hours per week.</li><li>Go to school, college, or a training program</li></ul>

This initial notice includes:

- A **description** of work rules and **who** needs to meet them
- A list of **exemptions**
- The **date** the adult needs to begin meeting the rules (or tell DTA they are exempt) to keep SNAP for more than 3 months.

# Warning Notices

LAURA PALMER  
C/O DALE COOPER  
100 MAIN STREET  
ANYTOWN, MA 11111-1111

Agency ID: 9999999  
Date: 99/99/9999

## For Your Information You Will Lose SNAP in 2 Months If You Do Not Act

Dear LAURA PALMER,

You did not meet the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Work Rules in **August 2024**. You will get SNAP for two more months unless you are exempt from or meeting the rules. If you are not exempt from and do not meet the rules for 3 months, you cannot get more SNAP until the day after **99/99/9999**. You may be able to get SNAP back before this date if you become exempt from or meet the rules.

LAURA PALMER  
C/O DALE COOPER  
100 MAIN STREET  
ANYTOWN, MA 11111-1111

Agency ID: 9999999  
Date: 99/99/9999

## For Your Information You Will Lose SNAP in 1 Month If You Do Not Act

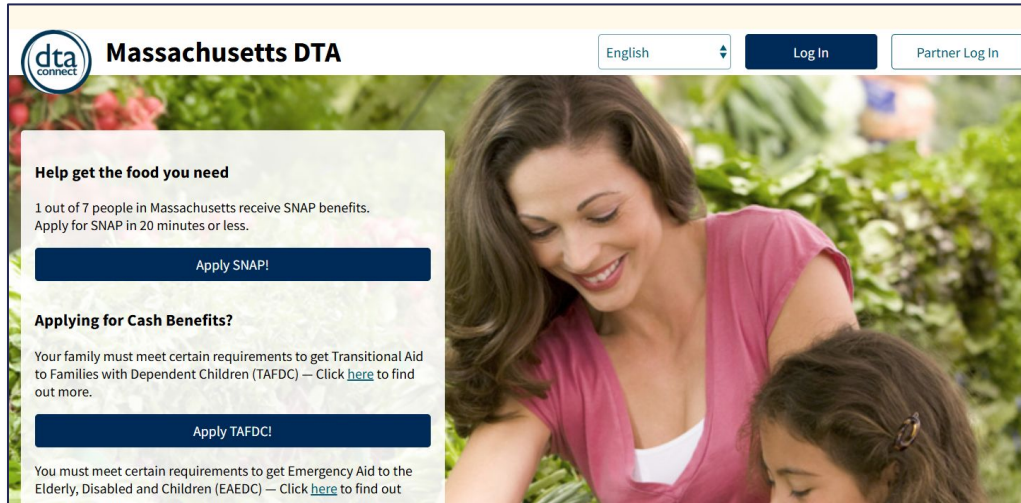
Dear LAURA PALMER,

You did not meet the ABAWD Work Rules in **August 2024**. Because this is the second month you did not meet the rules, your SNAP will end after **September 2024**, **unless you are exempt from or meeting the rules**. If you are not exempt from or meeting the rules, you cannot get more SNAP until **99/99/9999**. You may be able to get SNAP back before 99/99/9999 if you become exempt from or meet the rules.

You are exempt (do not have to meet the rules) if you meet any of the below. Tell us right away if you:

- Earn \$217.50 or more (before taxes) per week
- Have a hard time working because of physical or mental health issues
- Get a disability benefit

# How to See DTA Notices



- All notices are mailed & on DTAConnect (for past 12 months).
- Log onto client's DTA Connect account if meeting together, or if you have explicit written permission to use DTAConnect to see DTA case information.

# QUESTIONS?

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# How to meet the ABAWD Work Rules?

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# Work

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Work at least 20 hours/week on average, or 80 hours/month.

*\*Can combine with DTA training program to total 20 hours/week.*

Includes self-employment and in-kind or unpaid work. For example: unpaid internship or apprenticeship, unpaid work in exchange for rent, unpaid work for a faith-based organization, etc.

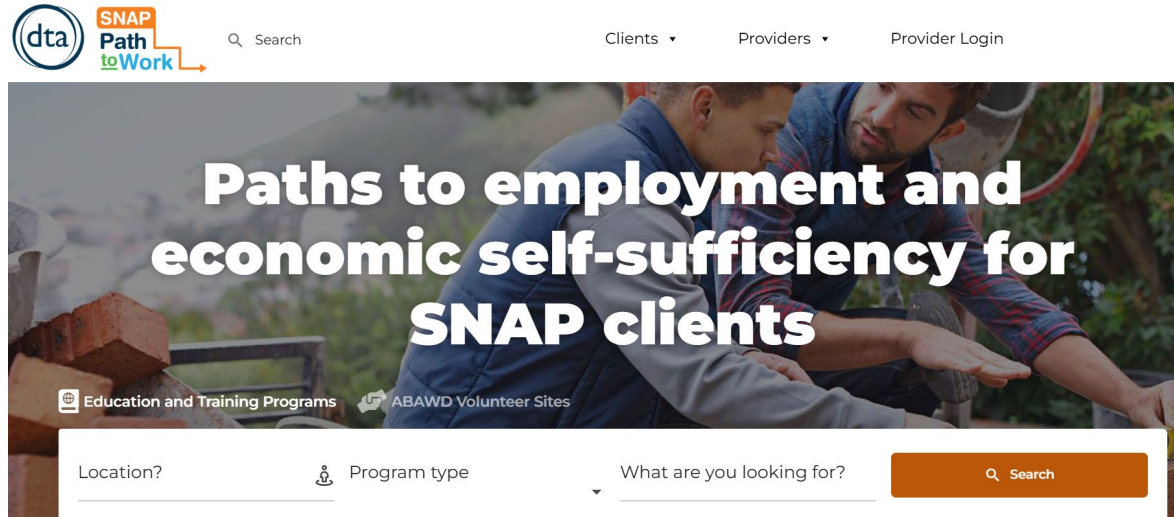


# DTA Training Program

Participate in DTA Employment and Training program for at least 20 hours/week on average.

*\*Or, combine with hours worked for a total of 20 hours/week.*

[SNAPPathToWork.org](https://SNAPPathToWork.org)



# Volunteer

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# of hours required/month:  
ABAWD's SNAP benefit divided  
by \$15 (current MA minimum  
wage).

*\*Cannot combine with  
work/training.*

ABAWDs can

- Arrange their own placement
- Ask DTA for a referral
- For list of community service providers approved by DTA:  
[SNAPPathToWork.org](https://SNAPPathToWork.org) ("ABAWD Volunteer Sites")

## Example: DTA Training Program + Work

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Nina, 27, works as a cashier at a grocery store for 10 hours per week. DTA sends Nina a *SNAP and Work* notice explaining she must meet the ABAWD Work Rules. Nina enrolls in a DTA employment and training program. Once Nina begins participating 10 hours/week - 20 hours total between program + work - DTA lists her as meeting the ABAWD Work Rules and she avoids termination.

# Example: Meet by Volunteering

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Alissa, 40, begins volunteering at a food pantry. Alissa gets \$292/month in SNAP. Alissa needs to volunteer 19 hours/month to meet the work rules and stay on SNAP for more than 3 months ( $\$292 \div \$15 = 19$ ).

(DTA tells Alissa on notices how many hours she must volunteer)

# How to verify meeting the rules

Employment	DTA Employment and Training	Volunteer/Community Service
<p><b>Paid work:</b> Verify income &amp; # of hours worked - pay stubs, letter from the employer, etc.</p> <p><b>In-Kind/unpaid Work:</b> Proof such as a letter with info on arrangement and # of hours worked.</p> <p>*Tell DTA if hard to get proofs.</p>	<p>Submit <a href="#">ABAWD Training Program Information Request</a> form</p>	<p>Submit DTA participation report</p>

→ See slide 18 on how to send DTA documents

# Trainings to come....

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- MLRI trainings on **Tues. June 17 @ 2** and **Tues. July 15 @ 2**
- Focus on terminations & getting back on SNAP:
  - Good reasons to miss meeting the rules (“good cause”)
  - Impact of termination on other household members
  - Special second 3-months of SNAP for some ABAWDs after termination
  - Appeals
  - & more



# QUESTIONS?

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# Advocacy Tips

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1. ***Double check if ABAWD should be exempt!*** Check every time you talk to an ABAWD - life changes, DTA makes mistakes.
2. Connect clients to DTA SNAP Path to Work programs - [SNAPPathtoWork.org](https://SNAPPathtoWork.org).
3. Stay in touch for the 3 months in case client becomes exempt, able to meet the rules, etc.
4. If having trouble reaching DTA, see MLRI tips [here](#).
5. [Share concerns/stories with MLRI](#) - advocacy needed to oppose Congress worsening the work rules!



# ABAWD Work Rules Resources

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- [MLRI's ABAWD Guide for Community Organization](#)
- [MLRI Know Your Rights flier for ABAWDs](#)
- [MLRI form for stories/concerns](#)
- DTA [Mass.gov page](#) on the Work Rules

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

**SNAP 3-month time limit for some  
Massachusetts adults on SNAP**



**MLRI**  
MASSACHUSETTS  
LAW REFORM  
INSTITUTE

Some adults on SNAP who are 18–54 years old have to meet work rules to keep SNAP for more than 3 months between now and January 1, 2027. DTA calls this time limit the “ABAWD Work Rules.”

# Cash benefits and other resources for childless adults

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**DTA Cash Assistance:** EAEDC for older adults/persons with disabilities with no or very low income.

[DTAConnect.com](https://DTAConnect.com). MLRI [flier on EAEDC here](#).

**Chapter 115 Veterans Benefits:** Monthly cash benefit for needy MA Veterans, dependents & parents of veterans. [Mass.gov/service-details/chapter-115-benefitssafety-net-program](https://Mass.gov/service-details/chapter-115-benefitssafety-net-program)

**RAFT - Rent, mortgage, and utilities** help: Call 2-1-1 or go to [Mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-raft-emergency-help-for-housing-costs](https://Mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-raft-emergency-help-for-housing-costs)

**Emergency food:** Call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline: 1-800-645-8333

**Legal Aid:** [MassLRF.org](https://MassLRF.org).

# SNAP Advocacy Resources

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- [2024 SNAP Advocacy Guide](#) (2025 coming soon!)
- All MLRI's Advocacy Guides available for free on [MassLegalServices.org](https://www.masslegalservices.org)
- [MassLegalHelp.org](https://www.masslegalhelp.org)
- Contact: Vicky Negus, [vnegus@mlri.org](mailto:vnegus@mlri.org), Pat Baker, [pbaker@mlri.org](mailto:pbaker@mlri.org), or Tasmiah Ahmad, [tahmad@mlri.org](mailto:tahmad@mlri.org)
- Join MA SNAP Coalition (monthly zoom meetings)! Contact Vicky or Pat to join.
- [DTA Regulations](#) and [DTA Online Guide](#) (*note Guide is out of date*)

# QUESTIONS?

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