

# SNAP ABAWD

## Time Limit Checklist

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Massachusetts has a federal SNAP time limits for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). An ABAWD is someone between the ages of 18 and 49 who is not disabled, pregnant or living with minor children.

An ABAWD can only get 3 full months of SNAP in a 36-month period—unless s/he lives in a **waived part of MA**, meets an **exemption**, or is meeting certain hours in **qualifying work activities**. Some ABAWDs **who have met the rules in the past** can get a second 3 months of SNAP. The 36-month period re-started in Massachusetts on January 1, 2018.

If a SNAP recipient is getting letters from DTA about ABAWD work rules, check below to see if they are exempt or, if not, how to meet the work rules. Follow the Client Action item to make sure SNAP benefits will not be interrupted.

### Exemptions

#### Under age 18 or 50 and older

**CLIENT ACTION** → DTA has already exempted ABAWDs based on age. DTA should know when people turn 50 and become exempt. If you turn 50, call DTA to keep your SNAP or to get back on.

#### Physically or mentally unable to work 20 hours per week

Many ABAWDs are not actually “able-bodied,” but DTA may not know if the person does not get a disability benefit. An ABAWD can be exempt from the three month time limit if s/he has a physical or mental condition that “*reduces their ability to work.*” Being determined to be unfit for work has a much lower standard of unfitness than SSI and does not require a specific diagnosis or submission of medical test results.

**CLIENT ACTION** → Have a health care provider fill out DTA’s **ABAWD medical report form**. It can be signed by many health care providers, including:

- Doctor, doctor’s assistant or representative of a doctor’s office
- Nurse practitioner
- Licensed or certified psychologist
- Licensed social worker
- Osteopath
- Certified mental health counselor
- Certified midwife

○ **In a substance abuse disorder program**

**CLIENT ACTION** → Have the program director or counselor fill out DTA's **ABAWD medical report form**.

○ **Homelessness**

Massachusetts will exempt homeless ABAWDs who lack a stable night time residence or meet other criteria. DTA should screen homeless ABAWDs to see if they are exempt by asking some basic questions.

**CLIENT ACTION** → Homeless clients can either call DTA and ask them about the homeless screening questions or complete the DTA ABAWD **Homeless Exemption Form**.

○ **Victim of domestic violence and in a DV shelter or other safe home**

**CLIENT ACTION** → Call DTA and tell them you are in a DV shelter, safe home or fleeing an abusive situation. A DTA Domestic Violence specialist should help you and assess your situation.

○ **Receiving a disability benefit**

Including, not limited to, SSI, VA benefits based on a disability, MassHealth for persons with disabilities and certain disability retirement pensions. Also includes certain temporary disability benefits, such as Workman's Compensation.

**CLIENT ACTION** → DTA has already exempted ABAWDs they know get a disability benefit. If you get a disability benefit and are not sure if DTA knows about it, call DTA and ask.

○ **Receiving unemployment benefits, or have applied for unemployment benefits**

**CLIENT ACTION** → Call DTA and tell them you are getting or applied for unemployment benefits. DTA should be able to look up information about your unemployment case without you having to send them anything.

○ **Living with a child under age 18 who is part of your SNAP household**

This can be the ABAWD's own child, sibling, or the child of a family s/he lives with.

**CLIENT ACTION** → DTA should know already if someone in your SNAP household is under 18. If a child moves into your household, call DTA and tell them.

○ **Pregnant (any stage)**

**CLIENT ACTION** → Call DTA to let them know you are pregnant. Have a health care provider complete DTA's **ABAWD medical report form** or send DTA other proof of pregnancy.

- **Caring for an incapacitated person or a child under 6** (does not need to live in the same household)

**CLIENT ACTION** → If you care for an incapacitated person or child under 6, call DTA and let them know. Additional proof may be needed.

- **A student enrolled at least half-time in school**  
Including high school, a training program or institute of higher education.

**CLIENT ACTION** → Call DTA and tell them you are in school. If you are in college, your school will need to fill out the **Educational Income and Expense Form** and (if community college) the **Community College Verification form**. See [Masslegalservices.org/food4students](https://masslegalservices.org/food4students)

### Qualifying Work Activities

If a person meets the below work rules, they should be able to keep getting SNAP beyond the three month limit.

- **Working at least 20 hours per week on average, including self-employment or in-kind work**

**CLIENT ACTION** → Call DTA and send them proof of your income. Below are examples of documents you can send. If you do not have proof or can't get it, ask DTA for help. They can call your employer directly. The law says they should help you get proofs if you need help.

- Last four weeks of pay stubs
- A signed and dated statement on employer's letterhead with anticipated weekly hours and pay per hour
- Proof of your self-employment, such as tax returns
- A signed and dated statement about your in-kind work including the number of hours worked each week

- **In an eligible work training program for at least 20 hours per week on average**

**CLIENT ACTION** → To enroll in an employment and training program, call DTA Employment and Training staff at 1-888-483-0255 or visit [www.snappathtowork.org](http://www.snappathtowork.org)

- **Doing volunteer work or community service**  
Number of required hours/month = amount of the ABAWD's SNAP divided by 12 (MA minimum wage).

**CLIENT ACTION** → You can choose a community service site to volunteer at or you can see if DTA can refer you to a site. If you are volunteering, fill out the **DTA Community Service Participation Form** and send it to DTA **each month**. It needs to be signed by staff at the community service site. If you need help finding a community service site or want to check if your community service hours count, call the DTA ABAWD hotline at **1-888-483-0255**.

## Geographically Waived Areas

### ○ Living in a “high unemployment” waived area

In 2019 ABAWDs in certain cities or geographic areas of Massachusetts are exempt from the time limit due to high unemployment rates. See DTA’s Online Guide for a list of counties and towns.

**CLIENT ACTION** →DTA automatically exempts ABAWDs who live in the designated areas. If you move into one of these areas, call DTA right away to tell them your new address. You may need to send DTA proof of your new address.

## Second 3 months of SNAP for ABAWDs who have met the rules

ABAWDs can qualify for three additional months of SNAP – even if they are not currently meeting the work rules—if they got back on SNAP while meeting a work rule OR they were off SNAP but worked enough hours in 30 days. When reapplying for SNAP, make sure to tell DTA if you met the work rules while you were not on SNAP. Call DTA at **1-877-382-2363** for more information.

## If none of the above apply

Contact DTA right away at **1-888-483-0255** or visit [Snappathtowork.org](http://Snappathtowork.org) to find out more about what programs may be available to meet the work rules and continue to receive SNAP past three months.

## Resources and DTA Contact Information

**For more information, including copies of all ABAWD forms:**

**MLRI website:** [Masslegalservices.org/ABAWD](http://Masslegalservices.org/ABAWD)

**DTA website:** [Mass.gov/SNAP-work-rules](http://Mass.gov/SNAP-work-rules)

### **DTA Contact Information:**

Call the DTA Assistance Line: 1-877-382-2363

Send proofs to DTA:

- By mail: DTA Document Processing Center, P.O. Box 4406, Taunton, MA 02780-0420
- By fax: (617) 887-8765
- In person at your local DTA office. Go to [Mass.gov/SNAP](http://Mass.gov/SNAP) to find your local office.
- Through DTA’s mobile app, DTA Connect, or [DTAConnect.com](http://DTAConnect.com)

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