

September 18, 2026

GENERAL LETTER NO. 7-C-127

ISSUED BY: Bureau of Financial, Food, and Work Supports
Division of Community Access and Eligibility

SUBJECT: Employees' Manual, Title 7, Chapter C, **SNAP Nonfinancial Eligibility**,
Contents 1 and 2, 1-3, 5, 10 and 11, 14-16, 18, 25, 26-31, 32-37, revised; 38,
new.

Summary

This chapter is revised to update

- when a mandatory work registrant status changes,
- definition of parent,
- income limits for FFY27,
- drug/alcohol rehab clarification
- removal of legal references that no longer apply

Effective Date

Upon receipt.

Material Superseded

Remove the following pages from Employees' Manual, Title 7, Chapter C, and destroy them:

Page	Date
Contents 1 and 2	June 20, 2025
1-3, 5, 10 and 11, 14-16, 18, 25	September 27, 2024
26-31	June 20, 2025
32-37	September 27, 2024

Additional Information

Refer questions about this general letter to your eligibility determinations manager.

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Overview

This chapter explains who is included in a SNAP household (the “household concept”) because the household concept is the basis for determining eligibility for SNAP.

This chapter also contains information about the nonfinancial requirements a household must meet to be eligible for SNAP. Nonfinancial requirements are factors like age, work requirements, and where a person lives.

Household Composition

The following sections explain policies on treatment of:

- [Mandatory household members](#)
- [Nonmandatory members](#)
- [Ineligible household members](#)
- [Children under joint custody](#)
- [Elderly and disabled people](#)
- [Family-life homes](#)
- [Foster and pre-adoptive children](#)

Mandatory Household Members

Mandatory household members include:

- [Spouses living together](#)
- [Parents and children living together](#)
- [Children under parental control](#)
- [People who purchase and prepare food together](#)

Spouses

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.1(b)(1)(i)

Policy: Eligible spouses living together must be in the same SNAP household whether they eat together or not. This includes both legal and common-law spouses.

Parents and Children

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.1(b)(1)(ii)

Policy: Parents living with their children who are aged 21 and under must all be certified in the same SNAP household.

Procedure: Include a child age 21 and under in the parents' household even if the child routinely buys and fixes food separately from the parent **and**:

- Is married and living with the spouse, **or**
- Is a parent with a child in the home.

The term "parent" includes natural (biological) parents, adoptive parents, and stepparents.

If a parent's rights have been terminated, the legal relationship between child and parent ends, and the person is no longer considered a "parent" for SNAP purposes. A stepparent relationship ends with the death of, or the stepparent's divorce from, the child's natural or adoptive parent to whom the stepparent was married.

Consider a man a child's natural father if he:

- Was married to the mother at the time of the child's conception or birth (unless the court has declared this man **not** to be the father), or
- Has been declared by the court to be the father, even though not married to the mother at the time of the child's conception or birth, or
- Claims to be the father, **unless** the child already has another legal father as described above.

Mr. V lives with his son Hank, 25, his daughter Wendy, 23, his son Mark, 19, and Mark's wife Nancy. Because of their conflicting schedules, all buy and fix their food separately.

Hank and Wendy can each be a separate SNAP household. However, Mr. V, Mark, and Nancy must be in the same household, because Mark is not over age 21 and Nancy is Mark's spouse.

Children Under Parental Control

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.1(b)(1)(iii)

Policy: Eligible children under age 18 who are living with and under the parental control of another person must be in the same SNAP household as that person.

Procedure: Consider a person to be exercising "parental control," when the person fulfills the role of a parent, financially or otherwise. The person does not have to be related to the child.

EXCEPTIONS:

- Children are not under parental control if they are married, because state law defines them as adults.

- Foster children, along with their spouse or their children living with them, are not required to be in the foster parents' SNAP household, unless the household chooses to include them.

This is true even if they buy and fix food together with the foster parents. However, if the household excludes them, they cannot receive SNAP on a separate case.

People Who Purchase and Prepare Food Together

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.1(a)

Policy: In addition to people who are mandatory household members based on relationship, people who live together and buy and fix the majority of their meals together must be in the same SNAP household.

Procedure: Explain the option to buy and fix meals separately and to be certified as a separate household.

Accept the household's statement regarding eating arrangements and document it in the case file.

Nonmandatory Members

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.1(b)

Policy: "Nonmandatory members" are people who are not mandatory household members, as described above. They include:

- Roomers to whom the household provides lodging, but not meals, for compensation.
- Live-in attendants who provide medical care, housekeeping, child care, or other similar personal services. Live-in attendants can be separate households even if they buy, fix, and eat their food with the person for whom they are providing care.
- Other people who live with the household, but who do not routinely buy and fix their food with the household.

Procedure: Do not include nonmandatory members when determining the SNAP household's size, eligibility, or amount of benefits. (See [7-E, Nonmandatory Members' Income](#) for instructions.) If eligible, nonmandatory members can receive SNAP as a separate household.

Elderly Members Who Are Disabled

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.1(b)(2)

Policy: Under certain conditions, a person who is both elderly and disabled can buy and fix food with others and still be a separate household. However, an elderly and disabled person still cannot be a separate household from people that are listed under [Mandatory Household Members](#).

Procedure: Allow the elderly and disabled person to be a separate household when:

- The person is unable to buy and fix food independently because of a permanent disability. The disability can be physical or mental, disease-related, or non-disease-related. Determine disability by observing the person or through a statement from a physician or a licensed or certified psychologist saying that the person is unable to buy and fix food without help.
- The countable gross income of nonmandatory members living with the elderly and disabled person is at or less than 165% of the federal poverty level for the corresponding household size. The following chart gives the amount of monthly countable gross income that is 165% of poverty for the corresponding household size.

165% of the Poverty Level			
Number of People	Maximum Gross Monthly Income	Number of People	Maximum Gross Monthly Income
1	\$2,195	5	\$5,319
2	\$2,976	6	\$6,100
3	\$3,757	7	\$6,881
4	\$4,538	8	\$7,662
For each additional member, add \$781			

Do not include the elderly and disabled person or that person's mandatory household members when determining the household size and income of the other people living in the household.

The other people in the household can get SNAP benefits separate from the elderly and disabled person only if the elderly and disabled person and that person's mandatory household members are eligible to get SNAP benefits separately. This does not mean that the elderly and disabled person must accept SNAP benefits, only that eligibility exists.

Combination FIP or SSI and GA Households

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.2(j)(4)(vii)

A household is categorically eligible when all of its members meet the categorical eligibility policies for and receive benefits from one of the following programs:

- FIP or SSI unless a member is ineligible for SNAP because of an IPV.
- General assistance from a GA program that meets criteria for categorical eligibility.

For combination households, see [FIP and SSI Households](#) and [General Assistance \(GA\) Households](#) to determine whether to consider benefits to be received from each program.

Households Eligible for the Promoting Healthy Marriage Program

Legal reference: 441 IAC 48

Policy: The Promoting Awareness of the Benefits of a Healthy Marriage Program (PHMP) uses funds from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant to provide information about the benefits of a healthy and stable marriage. Households are categorically eligible for SNAP for any month in which they are eligible for the PHMP.

There is no resource limit for the PHMP. SNAP households are eligible for the PHMP if they meet **all** of the following criteria:

- Total gross countable SNAP income is at or below 160% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- No household member is currently disqualified due to an intentional program violation (IPV).
- All SNAP eligibility criteria other than resource limits and gross and net income limits are met.
- SNAP benefit amount is greater than zero. NOTE: Eligible one-member and two-member households are eligible for the “minimum benefit.”

Procedure: There is not a separate application for the PHMP. Eligibility for the PHMP is automatically determined whenever a household applies for SNAP. When you process the SNAP application, the ABC system will determine eligibility for the PHMP by comparing income to the chart below:

Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income for PHMP	Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income for PHMP
1	\$2,128	5	\$5,159
2	\$2,887	6	\$5,916
3	\$3,644	7	\$6,672
4	\$4,400	8	\$7,431
For each additional person, add \$759			

The notice of decision issued by the ABC system to approve SNAP will include language approving the PHMP if the household qualifies. When PHMP eligibility exists, the ABC system will assign the same certification period for the PHMP as for SNAP.

If you manually issue an NOD to approve SNAP, include language about approval of the PHMP if eligible. Households who would like more information about a healthy marriage may request to have a copy of Comm. 390.

Whenever SNAP eligibility is recalculated in the ABC system, eligibility for the PHMP is automatically redetermined. If SNAP eligibility ends, eligibility for the PHMP will be terminated.

Comment:

1. Household A applies for SNAP. The two-member household has monthly gross countable SNAP income of \$2,200 and meets all nonfinancial eligibility criteria. Because the household's income is within 160% of the federal poverty guidelines and the benefit amount would be greater than zero, the household is categorically eligible based on the PHMP.
2. Household B, which consists of three eligible members and a Specified Ineligible Alien who has income, applies for SNAP. The household's countable monthly SNAP income after proration is \$2,750, which is within 160% of federal poverty guidelines for a household of three.

The household meets all nonfinancial eligibility criteria. If the household's benefit amount would be greater than zero, the household is categorically eligible based on the PHMP.

Reactivating the Application

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.2(j)(1)(v), 273.10(d)(7)

Policy: When SNAP is denied on a jointly filed application, reactivate the application if the household becomes categorically eligible because FIP, SSI, or GA is approved.

Procedure: Start benefits from the beginning of the period for which FIP, SSI, or GA is paid or from the original SNAP application date, whichever is later.

Determine eligibility and benefits using the original application and any other available information. Do **not** require the household to complete a new application or to attend another interview. Contact the household to:

- Discuss possible eligibility, and
- Determine if any changes have occurred.

Obtain any necessary verification.

Zero-Benefit Cases

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.2(j)(2)(xi)

Policy: Deny categorically eligible households with three or more members when income causes SNAP benefit issuance to be zero.

Comment: The ABC system will deny households with three or more members if their benefit amount would be zero.

Reporting Requirements for Categorically Eligible Households

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.12(a)(5)(v)

Policy: Do not require categorically eligible households to report any income changes if the household was certified at an income level in excess of its gross income limit or reported income in excess of its gross income limit and remained eligible. Take appropriate action on all reported changes per reporting changes policy in [7-G](#).

Comment: A categorically eligible household that reports income in excess of its gross limit is not required to report further income changes until recertification. This includes households that are over the gross limit at the time of approval.

Review of Categorical Eligibility

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.2(j)(2)

Policy: When there is a change in household circumstances, review the case to see if the household has either gained or lost categorical eligibility.

Claims

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.18

Policy: Categorical eligibility cannot be rescinded retroactively.

Procedure: Do not establish an overpayment claim **only** because a household shouldn't have been granted categorical eligibility (should not have been approved for FIP, SSI, GA, or PHMP). There may be other reasons to establish a claim for the same time period (incorrect income, deductions, household size used, IPVs), but an incorrect categorical eligibility determination, by itself, is not a reason to establish a claim.

Citizenship and Alien Status

Legal reference: 7 U.S.C. §2015(f); 8 U.S.C. §§1612, 1613

Policy: Only the following people can get SNAP benefits:

- United States citizens,
- Non-citizen nationals of the United States, and
- Aliens who hold an immigration status as an “eligible alien” for SNAP purposes.

Procedure: United States citizens are people born in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, or the Virgin Islands. Non-citizen nationals are people born in American Samoa or the Swain Islands.

See [7-I, Who Is An Eligible Alien](#) for who is an “eligible alien” for SNAP purposes. Also see 7-I, [Documentation of United States Citizenship by Birth](#) and [Documentation of Acquired Citizenship](#) for listings of the kind of documents that can be used as evidence of citizenship.

Cooperation

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.2(d)(1) and (2)

Policy: In order to be determined eligible for SNAP, households must:

- Complete and sign the application form;
- Be interviewed;
- Verify certain information;

- Cooperate in any review of its eligibility, including reviews that are a result of a reported change or a recertification application; and
- Cooperate in any review done by Quality Control

Procedure: Deny or cancel any household that refuses to cooperate. To “refuse to cooperate,” the household must be able to cooperate but clearly show that it will not take the necessary actions. Do not deny or cancel a household if there is a question about whether the household refused to cooperate or merely failed to cooperate.

To be denied for refusal to cooperate with the local office, a household must refuse to be interviewed, rather than just fail to appear for an interview.

The household may reapply, but it may not be determined eligible until it cooperates. See [Cooperation with Quality Control](#), below, for more information.

Cooperation with Quality Control

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.2(d)(2)

Policy: A household is ineligible if a member refuses to cooperate in any review of its eligibility done by quality control. The period of ineligibility is:

- 125 days from the end of the review period for reviews by state quality control staff **or**
- Nine months from the end of the review period for reviews by federal quality control staff.

The annual review period ends on September 30 of each year.

Procedure: A household terminated for refusal to cooperate with a quality control reviewer may reapply. If the noncooperating person is still a member of the household, do not determine the household eligible until **either**:

- The household cooperates with the quality control reviewer by attending an interview and providing required verification, or
- The period of ineligibility is over.

If the noncooperating person moves to a new household, the ineligibility applies to the new household.

Comment: Ineligibility due to noncooperation with quality control is not treated like a sanction or disqualification. Follow instructions in [14-B\(5\), Closing Case for Non-Cooperation With QC](#).

Investigations

Legal reference: 481 IAC 82

Policy: The purpose of an investigation is to prevent households from fraudulently receiving benefits or determine if households previously received benefits incorrectly. HHS contracts with the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing (DIAL) to conduct investigations.

Complete investigations on applicant, participant, or past recipient households, as explained below:

- Application/Recertification investigations occur at the time of application or recertification, and include applications to add a member to an ongoing household. Complete these investigations before an eligibility determination to prevent households from receiving benefits to which they are not entitled.
- Ongoing/Closed investigations occur on a household that is currently participating or has received benefits in the past. These are initiated if HHS believes the household may have provided incorrect or incomplete information that led to the receipt of benefits to which the household were not entitled. Use these findings to determine whether the household's current benefit level needs to be adjusted or past benefits are subject to overpayment.

It is important to remember that DIAL does not determine eligibility. DIAL investigates and provides their findings, but HHS is responsible for using that information to determine eligibility based on policy.

Procedure: Before referring a case for investigation, take a prudent-person approach to the information the client gives you. Allow the household an opportunity to explain the situation or resolve any questionable information. If you still find the information to be questionable, refer the case to DIAL using form **470-5130, DHS Investigative Referral to DIA**.

Once the referral is received, DIAL will conduct an investigation. It is the responsibility of the investigator to gather information and state the findings. DIAL will close the investigation and provide a written investigative report with the findings to HHS within the following timeframes:

- For application investigations, within 10 working days.
- For ongoing investigations, within 90 working days.

Because application investigations are done before making a benefit determination, there is a shorter timeframe to ensure HHS is able to meet processing standards. This means application investigations may not be as thorough as ongoing investigations. If a more thorough investigation is warranted, the case should be re-referred as an ongoing investigation after the application is processed.

Strikers

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.1(e)

Policy: Special procedures apply to households that have a member who is on strike.

Procedure: Processing an application from a household in which one or more of the members may be on strike is a three-step process.

1. Determine if the person is a striker. If a household member is **not** considered a striker, no special procedures apply. The following people are **not** considered strikers:
 - A person affected by a lockout. A lockout occurs when an employer closes the workplace in order to resist demands of employees.
 - A person who goes on strike who was exempt from the work registration requirements the day before the strike. (This provision does not apply to people who were exempt from work registration only because they are employed.)
 - A person unable to work as a result of striking employees (e.g., truck drivers left with nothing to deliver).
 - A person who is not participating in a strike. A person is not participating in a strike if the person meets all of the following conditions:
 - The person is not picketing and does not intend to picket during the strike,
 - The person does not draw strike pay, and
 - The person either crosses the picket line and goes to work or provides a signed statement indicating the person is willing to return to work but does not want to cross the picket line for fear of injury, death, or trauma from harassment. The service area manager determines if such a risk to the person's physical or emotional well-being exists.
2. If a household member **is** considered a striker, determine if the household would have been eligible the day before the strike occurred. Use the household membership on which current eligibility will be based. If the household would **not** have been eligible, deny the application.
3. If the household **would** have been eligible before the strike **and** is otherwise eligible at the time of application:
 - Compare the striker's income before the strike to the striker's current income.
 - Add the higher of the two amounts to the current income of non-striking members during the month of application.

Continue to count income according to this method for each month in which a member is on strike. The higher amount is used because households cannot receive an increased allotment because of a decrease in the income of the striking members of the household.

4. To determine eligibility in comparison to the net income eligibility standard, use deductions for the month of application the same as for any other household member. Whether you are using the striker's pre-strike earnings or current income, allow the earnings deduction if appropriate. Approve the application if the household is eligible.

When the striker returns to work and the household remains eligible, continue to use this calculation until full regular paychecks are received and considered.

Work Registration

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(j), 441 IAC 65.11

Policy: SNAP applicants and recipients are mandatory work registrants unless they qualify for an exemption listed under [Exemptions From Work Registration](#). A mandatory work registrant (MWR) is required to meet the work requirements listed under [Work Requirements for MWRs](#) to be eligible for SNAP benefits.

Procedure: Determine the work registration status of:

- Each household member at application and recertification.
- A new member who is joining an ongoing household. See [Changing from Exempt to MWR](#) for when a new member must be registered for work.
- Members of a certified household when a change in household circumstances may also change the work registration status of the members. See [Changing from Exempt to MWR](#) and [Changing from MWR to Exempt](#) for instructions.

When determining work registration status, all individuals must be screened for all possible exemptions from work registration. The exemption that would be effective for the longest period of time must be applied.

Enter the work registration status of each household member on the ABC system each time it is determined. Use the following codes to enter the person's status in the TD03 WR field:

- 3 Mandatory work registrant, not an able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD)
- 4 FIP recipient
- 9 Exempt from work registration and ABAWD work requirements
- E Potential ABAWD, only exempt from MWR and ABAWD due to earnings
- F Central Office use only
- L Mandatory work registrant and ABAWD who is not meeting the work requirement
- V Mandatory work registrant and ABAWD who meets the work requirement

Exemptions from Work Registration

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(b)

Policy: A person is exempt from mandatory work registration if the person is:

- Under age 16.
- Aged 16 or 17 and is not the head of the household. The head of household is the person that shows on ABC as the case name.
- Aged 60 years or older.
- Physically or mentally unfit for work. The person's condition can be either temporary or permanent. If the person's disability is not readily apparent, you may ask for verification. Verification can include proof such as:
 - A statement from a licensed health care professional, or
 - Proof that the person is receiving temporary or permanent disability benefits from the government or a private source.
- A FIP recipient or a refugee receiving Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).
- Caring for a dependent child under age six or an incapacitated person. The person must agree to register for work as part of the next scheduled recertification after the child's sixth birthday, unless another exemption applies. The child or incapacitated person doesn't have to be in the client's SNAP household or live with the client for the client to be eligible for this exemption. However, the client cannot be exempt for caring for a child under six or an incapacitated person as part of their job (their work hours or earnings may qualify them for an exemption; see below).

More than one person cannot claim responsibility for the care of the same child. If there are two or more children in a household, each adult can claim the responsibility for the care of different children. For example, in a household with two adults and two children, both adults can be exempt if they each claim responsibility for the care of a different child.

- Receiving job insurance benefits (JIB) or registered for work as part of the JIB application process (unemployment compensation).

NOTE: This exemption does not apply to union members who are laid off and expect to be recalled, because they are **not** required to register for work when they apply for JIB. Once they start to receive JIB benefits, union members are exempt from work registration.

- Working for pay at least 30 hours per week or receiving gross weekly earnings at least equal to the federal minimum wage multiplied by 30 hours. Effective July 24, 2009, the federal minimum wage rate is \$7.25 per hour.

When hours of work fluctuate, average the hours for a period of time that allows a reasonable estimate of the hours expected to be worked per week. Working for an in-kind benefit, such as working off rent, does not provide an exemption from work registration.

- Working at self-employment and receiving net earnings at least equal to the federal minimum wage multiplied by 30 hours.
- Working at self-employment for at least 30 hours per week, regardless of the amount of money earned. A statement from the person is sufficient documentation of hours of work. Home-schooling a child at least 30 hours a week is considered self-employment for the purpose of this exemption.
- A migrant and seasonal farm worker who is under contract or similar agreement with an employer or crew chief to start work within 30 days.
- Participating in a drug addiction or alcoholic treatment rehabilitation program. Participation can be either as a resident of the center or on an outpatient basis and may include, but is not limited to, programs such as:
 - Medically-managed inpatient or outpatient services
 - Medically-monitored treatment services
 - Narcotic treatment services for opiate addiction

NOTE: Participating in an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) program alone does not meet the criteria for this exemption. However, if an individual has a drug or alcohol addiction, discuss with the household any physical or mental barriers to employment the individual may have.

- An applicant for both SSI and SNAP who filed a joint application at the Social Security office. If the person filed for SSI, but applied for SNAP separately at HHS, do not use this exemption. Instead, determine if the exemption for “physically or mentally unfit for work” applies.

This exemption continues while the person is waiting for a decision about SSI eligibility. “Waiting for a decision” does not include the period of time during which a person is appealing a denial of the SSI application.

If the person becomes eligible for SSI, the exemption continues as long as the person continues to be eligible for SSI. If the Social Security Administration finds that person is **not** eligible for SSI, the exemption ends. This includes a person who is appealing a denial.

A person who is found ineligible for SSI still may be exempt from work registration under the exemption for being “physically or mentally unfit for work.” Determine if the person meets this exemption or a different exemption status within two months of notification of ineligibility for SSI.

- A person enrolled at least half-time in any recognized school, training program, or institution of higher education. Students enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education must meet the student eligibility requirements in [7-I](#).

This exemption continues during all school terms, vacations, and breaks when the student intends to register for at least half time for the next school term. The exemption ends when the person:

- Graduates.
- Is suspended.
- Is expelled.
- Drops out.
- Has completed a regular school term and does not intend to register for the next normal school term.

1. Travis is an 18 year old full-time high school student. He is not subject to student requirements (see [7-I](#)). Because Travis is enrolled at least half-time in high school, he is exempt from MWR and therefore exempt from ABAWD work requirements.
2. Taylor attends a CDL program through DMACC. She attends this program half-time. A person enrolled in an occupational training program is not considered to be enrolled in an institution of higher education and therefore is not subject to student requirements (see [7-I](#)). Because Taylor is enrolled half-time in this training program, she is exempt from MWR and therefore exempt from the ABAWD work requirements.
3. Bey is full-time college student at the University of Iowa and taking credit classes working toward an undergraduate degree. Bey is subject to student eligibility requirements in [7-I](#) and is only exempt from MWR if she meets the student eligibility requirements.

Work Registration Process

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(c), 7 CFR 273.7(c)(1)(ii)

Policy: By signing the application or recertification form, a SNAP applicant or recipient is considered registered for work. However, work requirements apply only to mandatory work registrants (MWRs) in the household.

Procedure: Explain at the interview:

- What work requirements are,
- The rights and responsibilities of MWRs, and
- The penalties for failing to comply with [Work Requirements for MWRs](#).

Form **470-5674** or **470-5674(S), SNAP Work Rules** will automatically be sent to the household. If issuing a manual NOD, give or mail form **470-5674** or **470-5674(S), SNAP Work Rules**, right away to the person who is subject to the work rules. Document that the form was given to the household and that you verbally explained the work requirements to the household. The oral explanation of work requirements can be found in the WISE narrative template link.

For desk RREDs, there's no requirement to verbally explain their work requirements. The **SNAP Work Rules** form will automatically be mailed to household based on the WR coding in the system. If issuing a manual NOD, give or mail form **470-5674** or **470-5674(S), SNAP Work Rules**, right away to the person who is subject to the work rules. See [Changing from Exempt to MWR](#) for the process to register new MWR members who join certified households.

Work Registration Status Changes During the Certification Period

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(b), 7 CFR 273.7(c)(1)(ii)

Changes in circumstances can cause a person's work registration status to change back and forth. During periods in which a person is not an MWR, the general work requirements for receipt of SNAP benefits do not apply. During the periods in which the person is determined to be an MWR, the general work requirements for MWRs do apply.

Changing From Exempt to MWR

If the exemption will be lost based on a reported change, follow the policies regarding acting on changes in [7-G](#) to determine whether the reported change requires immediate action or if it must be held until the next recertification. If the change doesn't require action based on the household's reporting requirements, hold the information and take appropriate action at the next recertification.

When a household reports a change in circumstances that results in a member losing an exemption from mandatory work registration or when a new member joining the household is subject to work rules, the system automatically mails form **470-5674** or **470-5674(S), SNAP Work Rules**, to the individual. If issuing a manual NOD, give or mail form **470-5674** or **470-5674(S), SNAP Work Rules**, right away to the person who is subject to the work rules. You must also provide a verbal explanation of the work requirements to the member who lost the exemption or the new household member subject to the work requirements as noted above.

If a person who previously qualified for an MWR exemption loses that status and as a result, loses their ABAWD exemption, you cannot apply the time limit (count ABAWD months) without screening the individual for all other exemptions. See [7-I, Changes in ABAWD Status](#).

Changing From MWR to Exempt

When a change is reported during the household's certification period that indicates a person has become exempt from work registration, follow the policies regarding acting on changes in [7-G](#) to determine whether the reported change requires immediate action or if it must be held until the next recertification. If the change doesn't require action based on the household's reporting requirements, hold the information and take appropriate action at the next recertification.

- If the change requires action based on [7-G](#) and verification is **not** necessary in order to allow the exemption, make the system entry right away to change the person to exempt.
- If the change requires action based on [7-G](#) and verification **is** necessary to allow the exemption, give the household 10 days to verify the circumstances. Keep the person coded on the system as an MWR until the verification is returned. Make the system entries to show the person's exempt status when you receive the verification.

Do not cancel a person for the sole reason that the person fails to verify an exemption from work registration. If this happens, keep the person coded as an MWR on the system until you receive verification.

If a work requirement violation happens while the person is coded as an MWR, be sure to give the person another opportunity to verify the claimed exemption, if necessary to avoid disqualification.

Work Requirements for MWRs

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(a)

Policy: Unless they have good cause to not do so, to be eligible for SNAP benefits MWRs must:

- Not voluntarily quit a job that provides at least 30 hours of work weekly.
- Work at least 30 hours a week if their employer offers at least 30 hours a week.

Procedure: See [Voluntary Quit](#) to determine if a job loss is a voluntary quit. See [Reduction in Work Effort](#) to determine if a reduction in work effort has happened.

Verifying a Claim of Good Cause for Not Complying

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(i)(3) and 273.7(i)(4)

Policy: Do not disqualify an MWR for committing a work requirement violation when the person has good cause for not complying. A person has good cause for not complying when:

- There were circumstances beyond the person's control. Examples include the person's illness, illness of another household member requiring the person's presence, a household emergency, the lack of transportation, or the lack of adequate child care for children ages 6 through 11. The household determines if adequate child care or transportation is available.
- The job was unsuitable. See [Determining if Employment Is Suitable](#) for reasons that make a job unsuitable.
- The employment became unsuitable after the person accepted the job. See [Determining if Employment Is Suitable](#) to determine if the job was unsuitable.
- There was discrimination by an employer based on age, race, sex, color, handicap, religious beliefs, national origin, or political beliefs.
- The work demands or conditions make it unreasonable to continue employment, such as working without being paid on schedule.
- A person leaves employment to accept another job or enroll at least half time in a recognized school, training program, or institution of higher education.
- A person leaves employment because another household member accepted a job or enrolled at least half time in a recognized school, training program, or institution of higher education in another county or state, causing the household to move.
- A person under age 60 resigns and it is recognized by the employer as retirement.
- A person accepts a genuine job offer that provides at least 30 hours a week, or weekly earnings at least equal to the federal minimum wage times 30 hours, and which because of circumstances beyond the control of the person either:
 - Did not materialize, or
 - Resulted in employment of less than 30 hours a week or pay of weekly earnings of less than federal minimum wage times 30.
- A person leaves a type of employment that, due to its nature, requires workers to frequently move from one employer to another. Examples include migrant farm labor, or construction work.
- The job quit was not a voluntary quit. See [Voluntary Quit](#) to determine if a voluntary quit occurred.
- The reduction in hours of work was not a reduction of work effort. See [Reduction in Work Effort](#) to determine if the person reduced his or her work effort.

Procedure: Always consider all the facts and circumstances when an MWR claims good cause for failing to comply with work requirements. When a good cause reason is based on circumstances beyond a person's control, the person's statement is sufficient verification.

Document the person's claim of good cause in the case record. In the case of a voluntary quit, include information such as that submitted by the household member involved, the employer, employee associations, union representatives, and grievance committees or organizations.

If you cannot obtain requested proof to dispute an MWR's claim of good cause, grant the person good cause and do not deny or cancel SNAP benefits. This most often occurs when the person quits due to discrimination or unreasonable demands made by the employer, or when the employer cannot be located.

Determining if Employment Is Suitable

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(h)

Policy: Failure to continue employment is grounds for disqualification only if the employment is suitable.

Procedure: Consider employment unsuitable if:

- The wage offered is less than:
 - The applicable federal or state minimum wage (whichever is higher), or
 - 80 percent of the federal minimum wage, if neither the federal nor state minimum wage is applicable.
- The job is on a piece-rate basis and the average hourly earnings are less than the hourly wage as defined above.
- The person must join, resign from, or refrain from joining any legitimate labor organization to get or keep the job.
- The job offered is at a site currently subject to a strike or lockout, unless the strike has been enjoined under Section 208 of the Labor-Management Relations Act (commonly known as the Taft-Hartley Act), or unless an injunction has been issued under Section 10 of the Railway Labor Act.
- The distance from the person's home to the place of employment is unreasonable, considering the expected wage and the time and cost of commuting. The person makes this determination.
- Daily commuting time exceeds two hours per day, not including taking a child to and from a child care facility. When a household move results in more than two hours commuting time the job is unsuitable. This includes moves within the state as well as from state to state. This applies whether a person leaves a job before or after the move.
- The distance to the place of employment is too far to walk, and neither public nor private transportation is available to get the person to the job site. The person makes this determination.

- The household member involved can show, or you become aware of, any of the following:
 - There is an unreasonable degree of health and safety risk.
 - The person is physically or mentally unfit to perform the job, as documented by medical evidence or by reliable information from other sources.
 - The job is offered within the first 30 days of registration and is not in the person's major field of experience.
 - The working hours or nature of the job interferes with the person's religious observances, convictions, or beliefs.

Voluntary Quit

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(j)

Policy: Mandatory work registrants are not eligible for SNAP benefits when they voluntarily quit a job that provided 30 hours a week of work **or** weekly earnings at least equivalent to the federal minimum wage multiplied by 30 hours.

Procedure: Consider it "voluntary quit" when:

- A person quits suitable employment voluntarily without good cause. See the policies [Verifying a Claim of Good Cause for Not Complying](#) and [Determining if Employment Is Suitable to](#) determine if the person had good cause to quit.
- An employee of the federal, state, or local government is fired because of participating in a strike against the employer. Good cause provisions do not apply to this situation.

Comment: It is **not** a voluntary quit when a person:

- Terminates a self-employment enterprise.
- Resigns at the demand of the employer.
- Does not reenlist in the military.

Reduction in Work Effort

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(j)

Policy: Mandatory work registrants are not eligible for SNAP when they voluntarily and without good cause reduce their work effort to working less than 30 hours a week. This policy applies to both employed and self-employed individuals.

Procedure: Do not apply this policy to jobs that provided less than 30 hours of work per week before the reduction. Do **not** use the minimum wage equivalency to

determine the number of hours a person works for the purpose of applying this policy.

It is not a reduction in work effort when a person reduces hours of work:

- But not to less than 30 hours per week, or
- At the demand of the employer, or
- To less than 30 hours per week on a temporary basis. A person may temporarily reduce hours of work for reasons like vacation or personal business.

Disqualification for MWR Work Violations

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(f)

Policy: Mandatory work registrants are not eligible when within 30 days before the date of applying, after applying, or while certified for SNAP benefits, they without good cause:

- Voluntarily quit a job. See [Voluntary Quit](#) for what constitutes a voluntary quit.
- Voluntarily commit a reduction in work effort. See [Reduction in Work Effort](#) to determine if a reduction in hours of work is a reduction in work effort.

Procedure: Apply a penalty only to the person who committed the violation. For the appropriate penalty, see [Disqualification Periods](#).

If acting on an application, do not delay benefits beyond the normal application processing times solely to determine a possible voluntary quit or a reduction in work effort.

If you receive verification that a person committed a voluntary quit or reduction in work effort after the person has already been certified for SNAP benefits, apply the appropriate disqualification period. Do not do a claim for the SNAP benefits the person received before the disqualification was imposed.

Send the household a notice denying the person's benefits and informing the household of:

- The type of violation, voluntary quit or reduction in work effort.
- The length of disqualification period.
- Its right to reapply at the end of the disqualification period.
- Its right to request a fair hearing.

Do not disqualify applicants or people certified for SNAP benefits who:

- Become exempt from work registration before the disqualification period is imposed.
- Were exempt from work registration when the work requirement violation happened, unless they were exempt only because of being employed at least 30 hours a week (or having equivalent earnings).

Do not disqualify people who voluntarily quit or reduce work to less than 30 hours weekly while not certified for SNAP when they join a participating household.

Disqualification Periods

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(f)

Policy: Disqualification periods are the same for all violations of work requirements. The length of disqualification to apply depends on how many times an MWR has failed to comply with one of the requirements.

Procedure: A disqualification period is set for a minimum number of months for the first and each subsequent violation. However, the minimum disqualification period is extended at the end of the set period of months until the person complies with the requirement that was failed. The disqualification periods are:

- For the first violation: 2 months or until the person complies, whichever is later.
- For the second violation: 3 months or until the person complies, whichever is later.
- For the third and subsequent violations: 6 months or until the person complies, whichever is later.

See [Ending a Disqualification](#) for how a disqualified person can become eligible for SNAP benefits after a disqualification period has been implemented.

Applying a Disqualification

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7

Policy: If the disqualified person is a member of an ongoing household, issue a **Notice of Decision** within ten days after you determine it is appropriate to apply a sanction. The first month of the disqualification period is the month after the end of the timely notice period.

Procedure: A notice of adverse action is required when a household's certification ends before or at the same time as the adverse action notice period would end, and the household has not been recertified. Start the disqualification period with the month after the last month of certification.

If you find out about a violation when the household's case is closed, begin the disqualification with the month you find out.

When disqualifying a member of a household that is certified but in canceled status, hand-issue a notice of adverse action and give timely notice.

If a household that is not certified applies for certification while a member's disqualification is in place, deny the person's benefits and approve benefits for the eligible members of the household.

If a person's benefits are continued pending a fair hearing and your decision is upheld, begin the sanction the first month after the hearing is decided, allowing timely notice. The benefits received while a hearing is pending are not subject to a claim.

When you discover that a disqualification period was not timely implemented, impose the disqualification period after giving timely notice. Benefits issued during the period of time that the disqualification period should have been in place are not subject to a claim.

Ending a Disqualification

Legal reference: 7 CFR 273.7(e)

Policy: There are two ways that an MWR who has been disqualified for a work requirement violation can get SNAP benefits again. A disqualified person can become eligible again by:

- Becoming exempt from work registration for any reason listed under [Exemptions from Work Registration](#), or
- Serving the minimum disqualification period **and** complying with the failed requirement. If the person has not complied with the requirement that was failed by the time the minimum disqualification period ends, the disqualification remains in effect until the person does comply with the requirement that was failed.

Procedure: A disqualified person complies by:

- Getting a new job that is comparable in salary **or** in hours to the job that was quit, if disqualified for a voluntarily quit.

NOTE: If the new job provides at least 30 hours per week or pays gross weekly wages of at least the federal minimum wage times 30 hours, the person becomes exempt from work registration and does not have to serve the minimum disqualification period. See below.

- Increasing hours of work to 30 or more, if disqualified for a reduction of work effort. NOTE: When the hours of work increase to 30 or more, or gross weekly wages increase to at least the federal minimum wage times 30 hours, the person becomes exempt from work registration and does not have to serve the minimum disqualification period.

Do not implement the disqualification period if before the effective date of the disqualification period the person either:

- Complies with the failed requirement, or
- Becomes exempt from work registration for any reason.

Reinstate the person's benefits if necessary.

When the disqualification period of a person who is a member of a certified household ends for any reason, add the person back into the household starting with the month following the month in which the disqualification ended. If the disqualified person is not a member of a certified household, the person must file a new application to get benefits again.

1. Mr. M is disqualified for a minimum of two months for voluntarily reducing his hours of work to less than 30 hours per week. The disqualification period starts on March 1. The rest of his household remains certified.

On March 14, Mr. M starts a new job working 30 hours per week. He is now exempt from work registration, because he is working 30 hours a week. Mr. M is added back to the eligible household effective April 1.
2. Same situation as Example 1, except that Mr. M does not start his new job until May 14. He is added back to the eligible household effective June 1, for a total of three months of disqualification.