

STATE

December 26, 2007

URGENT: CHANGE IN FOOD STAMP WORK REQUIREMENTS

SUMMARY

- Beginning January 2, 2008 customers living in 22 counties (**including DuPage County**) must meet the food stamp work requirement policy in order to be able to receive Food Stamp benefits. **This means that nonexempt customers residing in these counties are now at risk of losing their food stamp benefits if they do not meet the work requirement.**
- ***A customer is able to receive only 3 months of FS in a 3-year (36 months) period if the work requirement is not met.*** The 36-month period is a 3-year fixed period that began in Illinois on 01/01/06 and ends 12/31/08. The fixed period of time is for the entire state. Partial months of benefits do not count towards the 3 months. This means that if the person receives a full month of benefits in January 2008, he will need to meet the work requirement for April in order to receive April Food Stamp benefits. If the work requirement is not met, the person will not be able to receive Food Stamps until 2009.
- ***After the first 3 months an additional 3 months of benefits can be issued if the work and training requirement is met.*** After the additional 3 months the person must then verify on a monthly basis that they met the work requirement in the previous 30 days in order to receive benefits for the next month.

Counties that Must Meet the Work Requirement	
Adams	Livingston
Champaign	Madison
Coles	Marshall
DeWitt	McLean
Douglas	McDonough
DuPage	Mercer
Henry	Peoria
Jackson	Rock Island
Jasper	Sangamon
Jersey	Tazewell
Lake	Woodford

- The Express Stamps module will prevent anyone subject to the work requirement from applying if they live in Lake or DuPage County.
- Notices are being sent to inform nonexempt customers about the change as well as giving the person information about how to meet the work requirement through community work.

Who Must Meet the Work Requirement

A person must meet the work requirement if they:

- are age 18 through age 49; and
- receives food stamps only in a Category 08 case (this means the food stamps are not linked with medical or cash benefits); and
- Are not exempt.

A person is exempt from the work requirement if they are:

- are included in a FS case with children under age 18; or
- Physically or mentally unable to work (this includes temporary health problems such as a broken bone, or chronic illnesses when a person receives SSI, SSDI. Medical statements may need to be provided) or
- pregnant; or
- a student, enrolled at least half-time (students of higher education must meet student eligibility requirements); or
- responsible for care of an incapacitated person; or
- participating in a drug addiction or alcoholic treatment and rehabilitation program; or
- receiving Unemployment Insurance; or
- Residing in an exempt locale.

NOTE: Make sure you let the IDHS caseworker know if a person may be exempt.

How the Work Requirement is Met

A person meets the work requirement if he:

- works 80 hours per month or earn wages of at least the Federal minimum wage times 80 hours ($\$5.85 \times 80 = \468) this can include in-kind income such as working the required hours in exchange for payment of rent; or
- Participates and complies with an approved activity under the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program. Approved activities can be Basic Education (if no high school diploma or GED), Vocational Training (short term and requires prior approval as part of an employment plan), Work Experience or Earnfare (Activities must be 80 hours not including study time) or
- participates in a work program as a requirement to receive assistance from a local governmental unit; or
- performs community work for the number of hours required (this can be self initiated and be with a local church or community organization)

Work Requirement Policy for New Applicants

At application a person is to be told of this new policy and encouraged to work or participate in an activity upon approval. It is not a requirement that the client works or participates in an activity during the first 3 months of eligibility in order to be able to receive food stamps. If the person works under 80 hours or earns less than \$468 gross per month, he will also be told about this new rule and will be given a chance to increase hours or wages.

Supportive Service Payments

Supportive services (e.g. transportation help, minor car repairs up to \$300, initial employment expenses, help with minor school expenses) may be provided to someone in an approved Food Stamp employment and training activity. A customer is eligible to receive supportive service payments in advance to enable him to take part in the FSE&T program.