



NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

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SNAP Work Requirements Fact Sheet

As Congress debates reauthorization of the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, commonly referred to as the “farm bill,” some proposals are calling for stricter work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This fact sheet reviews what the federal SNAP program already requires, proposed changes, and current SNAP work requirements by state.

Federal Legislation on SNAP Work Requirements

Current federal law states that adults ages 18-59 receiving SNAP benefits are [required to work](#) part-time or agree to accept a job if offered one. Stricter rules apply to able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) that are 18-49, who are subject to a three-month limit of benefits in three years unless they meet a work requirement of 80 hours per month.

The federal regulatory minimum requires that ABAWDs between the ages of 18 and 49:

- Register for work.
- Participate in an employment and training (E&T) or workforce program, if assigned.
- Refrain from voluntarily quitting a job or reducing hours below 30 hours a week.

Failure to meet these requirements results in disqualification from SNAP for one month for the first instance, three months for the second, and six months for the third.

What is the Farm Bill?

The farm bill is the primary legislation passed by Congress every five years to address agriculture and nutrition programs at the federal level. This bill encompasses farm commodity supports, conservation, farm credit, trade, research, rural development, bioenergy, foreign food aid, and domestic nutrition assistance.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) accounts for 80 percent of farm bill spending. SNAP is the largest and most effective safety net for Americans facing financial instability and hardship. SNAP feeds about [42 million](#) Americans annually, at an average cost of [\\$1.86 per meal](#).

The last farm bill passed in 2014 and is set to expire on Sept. 30, 2018.

The debate over this year's farm bill ([H.R. 2](#)) centered on changes to SNAP, which accounts for 80 percent of farm bill spending. Under the 2018 farm bill, SNAP work requirements would be expanded to all adults capable of work, mandating that they either work or participate in work training for 20 hours per week. Seniors, pregnant women, caretakers of children younger than 6, and people with disabilities would remain exempt.

The 2018 farm bill also expands federal grants to states for SNAP E&T programs, increasing the budget from \$90 million to \$1 billion per year by 2021. This funding would target roughly 3 million ABAWDs, providing \$333 per person, per year for employment and training.

Proponents of the bill say SNAP recipients should work toward economic self-sufficiency, while opponents say adding work requirements doesn't address the fact that jobs are not available. On April 18, the 2018 farm bill was passed along party line votes in the House Agriculture Committee, with every Democrat on the committee opposed to the changes that added work requirements to SNAP. It must next get sufficient votes in the House of Representatives before moving to the Senate.

State Legislation on SNAP Work Requirements

States can seek [SNAP work requirement waivers](#) from the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to temporarily suspend the three-month limit for individuals in areas with insufficient jobs. At some point since the [time limit's enactment in 1996](#), every state [except Delaware](#) has sought a waiver.

In addition, states may exempt up to [15 percent](#) of their SNAP caseload that is ineligible for benefits because of the time limit, extending eligibility to one ABAWD for one month.

The 2014 farm bill established [E&T pilot projects](#) to test new strategies and determine the most effective means of helping SNAP recipients gain and retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency. These pilot projects were implemented in 10 states, starting in 2016. Each pilot project must undergo an evaluation process that has yet to be completed.

In 2018 state legislative sessions so far, two states enacted legislation related to SNAP work requirements:

- West Virginia enacted legislation that will rescind SNAP work requirement waivers for all counties in 2020.
- Wisconsin enacted legislation that requires all ABAWDs to participate in the state's E&T program at the federal maximum: 120 hours per month.

An additional six states—Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Louisiana—introduced legislation that would, in some form, eliminate SNAP work requirement waivers.

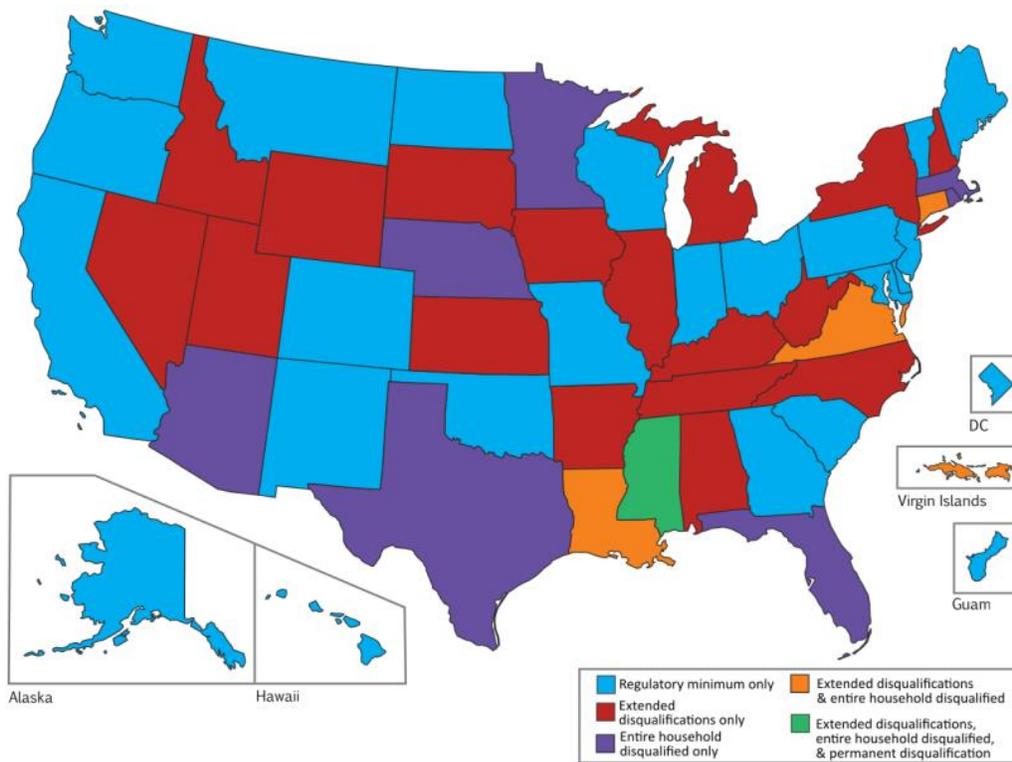
States also introduced legislation that would bring stricter governance to the work element of the SNAP program:

- Illinois introduced legislation that would require SNAP applicants to submit a plan for achieving employment and self-sufficiency to receive benefits.
- Michigan introduced legislation that, in addition to work requirements, would require a high school diploma or general education development (GED) equivalency to receive SNAP benefits.
- Missouri introduced legislation that would increase the disqualification periods for SNAP beneficiaries who fail to comply with work requirements.

Current SNAP Work Requirements by State

While a majority of states follow the federal minimum disqualification periods (one month for the first instance, three months for the second, and six months for the third), a number of states limit SNAP benefits through extending their disqualification periods or otherwise adding harsher sanctions:

- DC, Guam and 22 states follow the federal regulatory minimum.
- Seventeen states have extended disqualification periods.
- Six states disqualify the entire family if the head of household fails to comply.
- Four states have both extended disqualification periods and disqualify the entire family.
- One state, Mississippi, has extended disqualification periods, disqualifies the entire family, and permanently disqualifies the recipient after the third noncompliance.



Map courtesy of the USDA FNS State Options Report, 2017.

States where beneficiaries are disqualified from SNAP benefits at the federal regulatory minimum:

Alaska	Indiana	Ohio
California	Maine	Oklahoma
Colorado	Maryland	Oregon
DC	Missouri	Pennsylvania
Delaware	Montana	South Carolina
Georgia	New Jersey	Vermont
Guam	New Mexico	Washington
Hawaii	North Dakota	Wisconsin

States with extended disqualification periods:

Alabama	Kentucky	South Dakota
Arkansas	Michigan	Tennessee
Idaho	Nevada	Utah
Illinois	New Hampshire	West Virginia
Iowa	New York	Wyoming
Kansas	North Carolina	

States with sanctions for the entire household if the head of household fails to comply:

Arizona
Florida
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Nebraska
Rhode Island

States with extended disqualification periods and sanctions for the entire household if the head of household fails to comply:

Connecticut
Louisiana
Virginia
Virgin Islands

States with extended disqualification, permanent disqualification, and entire household sanctions. After the third noncompliance, disqualification from SNAP is permanent:

Mississippi

2018 State Legislation Regarding Work Requirements

Enacted

West Virginia	By October 2020, rescinds the state’s ability to issue SNAP work requirement waivers. Until October 2020, the waiver remains in effect for counties that have a recent year average unemployment rate above 10 percent or a recent two-year average unemployment rate 20 percent above the national average; qualify for extended unemployment benefits; or are designated as a “labor surplus areas” (HB4001 , enacted March 27, 2018).
Wisconsin	Requires all ABAWDs to participate in the FoodShare employment and training program, with exceptions (AB2 , enacted on April 10, 2018). Requires that all ABAWDs participate in the FoodShare employment and training program at the federal maximum: 120 hours per month (AB1 , enacted April 10, 2018).

Introduced

Illinois	Require all SNAP applicants and recipients to submit a personal plan for achieving employment and self-sufficiency when applying for or renewing benefits (HB5035 , pending). Require that the state not seek, renew, or extend any federal waiver of the 3-month time limit or work requirements for ABAWDs who apply for or receive SNAP benefits (HB5036 , pending).
Iowa	Require that the state not seek, apply for, accept, or renew any waiver of SNAP work requirements and enforces SNAP E&T programs (SF2370 , pending).
Michigan	Require, in addition to federal work requirements, a high school diploma or general education development (GED) equivalency to receive SNAP benefits (HB5589 , pending).
Minnesota	Require a review of unemployment data for all regions of the state in which a SNAP waiver is in effect and terminate waivers in regions that no longer meet the waiver requirements (HB3612 , pending).

Missouri	<p>Eliminate the SNAP work requirement waiver and require the state to assign individuals receiving SNAP benefits to a work program (HB1846, pending).</p> <p>Increase the disqualification periods if a SNAP beneficiary fails to comply with work requirements. The disqualification periods would change from one to three months for the first instance, three to six months for the second, and six months to two years for the third (HB1486, pending).</p>
New Jersey	<p>Require the state to exempt veterans from the ABAWD benefits time limit (AB1276; SB14, pending).</p> <p>Require the state to pledge to ensure availability of job training or similar activities to certain SNAP recipients to prevent loss of benefits (AB3205, pending).</p>
Oklahoma	<p>Require the state not seek, apply for, accept, or renew any SNAP work requirement waivers (HB3677, pending).</p>
Louisiana	<p>Require legislative approval of any waiver of SNAP work requirements for ABAWDs and require nonexempt SNAP beneficiaries to participate in E&T programs (HB128, pending).</p>

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