

THIS LETTER REPLACES DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE 10-2003 DATED MAY 29, 2003.

(Please note that this letter is being reissued to make changes to the list of counties below. No other changes have been made to the letter.)

THIS LETTER APPLIES TO THE FOLLOWING COUNTIES ONLY:

Ashe County	Columbus County	Lenoir County	Rutherford County
Catawba County	Edgecombe County	Person County	Scotland County
Chatham County	Hertford County	Robeson County	Stanly County
Cleveland County	Hoke County	Rockingham County	Vance County

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE 10-2003 (reissued)

(Food Stamps)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food Stamp Supervisors

DATE: June 3, 2003

RE: ABAWD Three-Month Exemption

EFFECTIVE

DATE: June 1, 2003

I. BACKGROUND

The Food Stamp Program requires able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) from the ages of 18 through 49 to participate in work activities as a condition of eligibility. These physically and mentally fit individuals are restricted to receiving food stamp benefits for a period of three months within a 3 year period, unless the individual is exempt or meets minimum work requirements as described below:

- A. Works an average of 20 hours per week (80 hours per month);
- B. Actively works in a Workfare Program;

C. Participates or complies with a work program at least 20 hours per week; **or**

D. Works and participates in a work program for a combined total of at least 20 hours per week.

As a result of high unemployment caused by layoffs and plant closings in many North Carolina counties, ABAWDs are having difficulty locating employment or suitable work activity to retain eligibility for food stamp benefits. The Division of Social Services submitted a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Agriculture that will allow some ABAWDs to receive food stamp benefits longer than the current three months within the three-3 year period without meeting the 80-hour work rule. Under North Carolina's waiver request, ABAWDs living in the counties identified above can receive benefits longer than the three-month period provided all other eligibility requirements are met. The waiver criteria stipulates that ABAWDs must be living in counties that are located in a Labor Surplus Area.

II. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

North Carolina's waiver has been approved and, as a result, the time limit on food stamp benefits, as outlined in Section 245 of the Food Stamp Manual, no longer applies in the waiver counties. In the affected counties, households containing an ABAWD can now be certified longer than three months. Work registration requirements are still applicable under the waiver, and employment and training (E&T) requirements and sanctions for non-compliance continue to apply.

The exemption applies to each of the identified counties above for one year. The Division's Employment & Training Program staff will reevaluate county exemption status in the spring of 2004.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

Effective June 1, 2003, at each application, recertification, and change in situation, evaluate each potential ABAWD. Determine eligibility as appropriate. Use the two-digit numerical ABAWD work registration codes found in Food Stamp Manual Section 245 to track ABAWDs affected by this waiver.

At each application, recertification, and change in situation in a food stamp case where there is an ABAWD whose dependent relationship code is J, and the person had previously complied with the work requirements, add the ABAWD back to the food stamp case after verifying all eligibility factors for the individual. Change the dependent relationship code (field 80K) to "Z," and use the appropriate work registration code (field 80E) on the DSS-8590 and ABAWD tracking form. Re-register the ABAWD with the Employment Security Commission using the NCSES-2624, if appropriate.

Apply this policy to all applications, recertifications, and changes processed June 1, 2003, or after.

If you have any questions concerning the policy contained in this letter, please contact your Program Integrity Representative.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Marshall, Chief

Food Assistance and Energy Programs

SM/DP/bh