News Release

Date: March 30, 2020

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Federal changes temporarily increase access to food benefits

Oregonians who have difficulty finding work during the COVID-19 pandemic do not have to worry about losing their food benefits, due to changes included in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

Normally, benefits are only available for three months for people who are not working but are considered able to work. The act temporarily suspends Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) time limits for a subset of the SNAP population who are required to seek work as a condition of receiving benefits. The changes begin April 1, 2020 and ends the month after the Secretary of Health and Human Services declares the COVID-19 state of emergency is lifted.

“SNAP benefits play a critical role in helping Oregonians get by during difficult circumstances,” said Dan Haun, director of Self-Sufficiency Programs at the Oregon Department of Human Services. “This change ensures that food benefits remain available for the increasingly number of Oregonians losing jobs during this pandemic.”

"As business and schools close because of this public health crisis, Oregonians are losing work and wages. SNAP is there to help put food on the table," said Annie Kirschner, executive director of Hunger-Free Oregon. "By waiving SNAP time limits, more Oregonians can now focus on staying healthy, instead of the threat of hunger."

DHS announced last week that Oregonians statewide now can use their SNAP benefits online to buy groceries at Amazon or Wal-Mart, which support the physical distancing required by Governor Brown’s Stay Home Save Lives Executive Order. In addition, DHS is not requiring interviews for those who report having no household income. Oregonians can apply for SNAP without visiting a DHS office. You can apply online at OHP.Oregon.gov.

"Whether you're experiencing job loss for the first time, or you've been struggling to make ends meet for a while, we want you to know about all the options open to you,” said Susannah Morgan, Oregon Food Bank CEO. “SNAP food assistance is our

region's most effective defense against hunger — especially in times of crisis. It's an important resource that can feed families and help prevent hunger from becoming yet another symptom of COV-19."

What is SNAP?

SNAP is a federally funded program that offers nutrition assistance to low-income individuals and families. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net. In Oregon, individuals and families apply for SNAP benefits at Department of Human Services (DHS) and Area Agency on Aging (AAA) offices across the state.

Who is an Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependent (ABAWD)?

An ABAWD is an individual:

- Age 18 but not yet 50; and
- Does not have children under age 18 in their SNAP filing group.

What are SNAP time limits?

An ABAWD is limited to three months of SNAP benefits in a three-year period, unless the individual:

- Is participating in work activities
- Meets an allowable exemption, or
- Lives in a waived area.

What does the suspension mean for SNAP customers?

While time limits are suspended, SNAP benefits will not be reduced or closed due to not meeting time limit work requirements.

Reporting requirements continue

ABAWDs still may report any changes that may increase their food benefits, such as loss of income or new allowable costs like rent or child care expenses. They are still required to report when their work hours drop below 20 hours per week, their income goes above a certain level, or if they have lottery or gambling winnings equal to or greater than $3,500.

Lost benefits in the past because of time limits?

If someone lost SNAP benefits due to time limit work requirements, they are encouraged to reapply. Apply online at: OHP.Oregon.Gov.

Questions?

SNAP customers can contact their local DHS or AAA office for more information. Find a local office at: oregon.gov/DHS/Offices/Pages/index.aspx

For other ways to connect with DHS, contact 211info:

- By calling 2-1-1 from any phone
- Text your zip code to 898211
- By email at help@211info.org
- Online

Additional resources

- Partners for a Hungry-Free Oregon COVID-19 Resources: www.oregonhunger.org/covid-19
- Oregon Food Bank COVID-19 resources: oregonfoodbank.org/emergestronger

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