

NEW YEAR, NEW WAIVER:

RECOMMENDATIONS for CONNECTING
ABLE-BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS
to BASIC FOOD in KING COUNTY, WA

February 2017

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United Way of King County

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Acknowledgements



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United Way of King County is a 501(c)3 organization working together to build a community where people have homes, students graduate, and families are financially stable.



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The Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program is a social justice program that trains, inspires, and sustains leaders. Fellows gain field experience fighting hunger and poverty through placements in community based organizations across the country, and policy experience through placements in Washington, D.C. The program bridges community-based efforts and national public policy, with a particular emphasis on racial equity.



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- Cares of Washington
- Earthcorps
- Elizabeth Gregory House
- FareStart
- Hunger Intervention Program
- Issaquah Food Bank
- Multiservice Center
- Neighborhood House of Washington
- Pike Market Food Bank
- Port Jobs
- Puget Sound Labor Agency
- Puget Sound Training Center
- Seattle Goodwill Industries
- Seattle Jobs Initiative
- Snoqualmie Valley Food Bank
- St. Elizabeth Hospital
- TRAC Associates
- Tukwila Pantry
- YWCA of Seattle King County

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recent loss of the Washington State time limit waiver threatened Basic Food benefits for thousands of able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) in 2016.

This report will outline the impact of the waiver loss as well as two state-sponsored options available to ABAWDs to meet SNAP (Basic Food) work requirements: Workfare and Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET).

Additionally, we offer recommendations to improve the quantity, quality, and accessibility of these opportunities through funding, capacity building, and advocacy.

This report is primarily for United Way of King's internal strategic direction as well as local social service and advocacy organizations to limit the impact of the time limit waiver on and alleviate food insecurity of ABAWDs in King County.

Some of the recommendations in the report include:

- Expand the Housing Ready & Crisis Resilient AmeriCorps team's responsibilities to include screening for ABAWD status as well as work requirement exemptions at community colleges, Regional Access Points, and free tax preparation sites.
- Connect ABAWDs to Employment & Training (E&T) programs and Workfare by placing trained AmeriCorps members at local DSHS offices to make referrals.
- Create a resource for social service providers detailing BFET program offerings, eligibility criteria, employment outlook, and other factors to make referrals more efficient and appropriate for individuals' needs and wants.
- Support the addition of "Comparable Workfare" as an accepted form of participation
- Fund collaborations between legal aid organizations and BFET programs to provide assistance with vacating and sealing, a process that can clear criminal history records and improve employment prospects. Support legislation to "ban the box" and increase work opportunities for people in re-entry.

WHY IT MATTERS

Not only does SNAP help millions of people and families put food on the table, it positively impacts the economy.^A We should be actively working towards maintaining and expanding SNAP benefits. ABAWDs are a population whose benefits have recently been threatened.

Every \$5 in SNAP benefits leads to \$9 in economic activity.

In order to support ABAWDs and ensure the continuity of Basic Food assistance, it is important to understand the unique challenges they face in securing stable employment and living wages.

For example:

- ❶ Over half of ABAWDs in Washington State have been unemployed in the past 12 months. Unemployment in of itself can be "decredentaling." Studies show prospective employers favor consistent work histories over similarly or more qualified applicants with large gaps in their resumes. ^{B, C}
- ❷ Over a quarter of ABAWDs have been formerly incarcerated. These 12,000 individuals join at least 65 million Americans with criminal records who face additional barriers to work on top of employer discrimination like access to a business or driver's license.^{B, D} The consequences of incarceration disproportionately affect communities of color making this an issue of racial equity as well. ^{B, E}
- ❸ Economic context: Today's "gig economy" lends itself to inconsistent hours and unstable incomes, not to mention having to bear the up front costs of insurance, expenses, and benefits traditionally provided by the employer. Such month to month variability results in "churning" in and out of eligibility for benefits like SNAP which "has a destabilizing impact within a household and creates unnecessary tension between long-term benefits earned through employment and the imperative of meeting immediate needs." ^B ABAWDs are not immune to such instability.

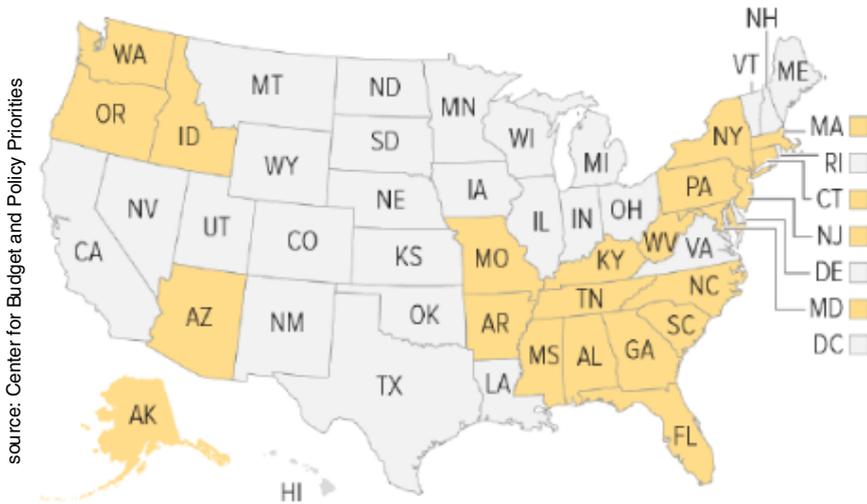
This report aims to provide a preliminary and exploratory analysis of Workfare and E&T programs to see how the needs of ABAWDs could be better met one year after the time limit policy went into effect.

Background

The Time Limit Policy

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) placed a 3 month time limit on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or Basic Food in Washington state) benefits for able-bodied adults without dependents in a 36-month time period unless they meet specific exemption criteria or work requirements.

States Newly Implementing SNAP Time Limits in 2016



High unemployment rates in recent years have resulted in many states qualifying for statewide waivers. Even after statewide waivers expired, states were eligible to apply for geographic waivers.

On January 1, 2016, 22 states re-introduced the time limit policy for the first time since before the recession (CBPP).

19 states, including Washington, no longer qualified for statewide waivers and introduced the time limit in at least part of the state.

3 states (Mississippi, South Carolina, and West Virginia) have elected to impose the time limit even though they were still eligible for statewide waivers.

An able-bodied adult with dependents (ABAWD) is:

- an adult in the 18-49 age range
- receiving Basic Food assistance (SNAP)
- NOT disabled
- NOT pregnant
- NOT living in an assistance unit with minor children

The time limit policy does NOT apply to ABAWDs who...



- live **outside of** King County or on the Muckleshoot Reservation
- have been chronically homeless and cannot find work



- are physically or mentally unable to work 20 hours/week on average



- care for a disabled or elderly person who cannot care for themselves
- participate in a drug or alcohol treatment program



- are students enrolled at least half time in high school or college



- are applying for or receiving unemployment benefits
- are receiving disability-based benefits (SSI, SSDI, ABD, Worker Comp, etc.)
- are receiving Refugee Cash Assistance benefits or Matching Grant Funds



- 15% Exemption: FNS allocates a 15% exemption to states to use as they see fit.

In 2016, WA State was granted 11,530 exemptions. This exemption category was used for participants of the RISE study, ABAWDs who were not informed of the participation requirements before their 3 months began accruing, and ABAWDs who were not given 10 days notice before losing benefits due to non-participation.

Washington State



Even though the federal policy limits benefits to 3 months in a 36-month period, it allows states to define the 36-month time period for themselves.

WA's clock started on January 1, 2015. DSHS did not count any month in which an ABAWD received benefits towards the 3 allotted months prior to the 2016 waiver loss. Washington operates on a fixed clock; the 36-month time frame is the same for everyone.

Essentially this means that ABAWDs not meeting the work requirements were eligible to receive 3 months of Basic Food between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2017.

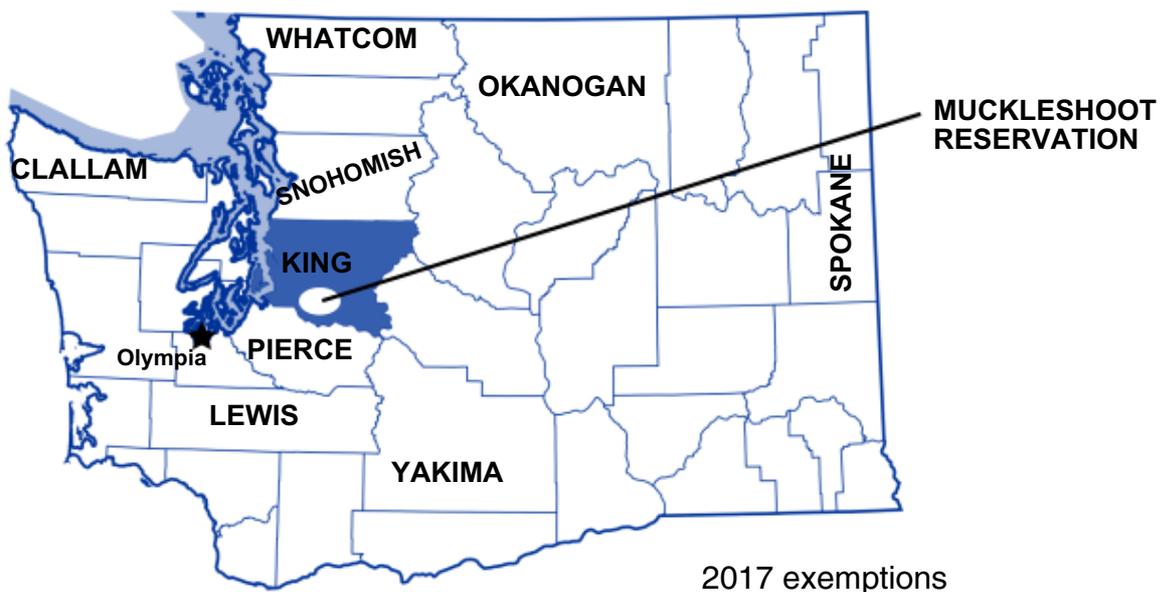
Beginning on January 1, 2018, the slate is wiped clean and all ABAWDs are re-eligible for benefits for another 3 months.

2016

Snohomish, King, and Pierce Counties (except the cities of Lakewood and Tacoma) were subject to the time limit policy in 2016. All other counties were exempt.

2017

ALL counties are exempt from the time limit except King County. Muckleshoot Reservation residents are also exempt.



Satisfying the Work Requirements

ABAWDs who are not exempt from the time limit policy can satisfy the work requirement in one or a combination of 3 ways:



WORK

at least 80 hours/month

This includes in-kind work (work for goods and services) and rental income, based on the actual number of hours the client works.



ENROLL

in one of several state approved employment and training (E&T) programs for 80 hours/month.



- ◇ Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET)*
- ◇ Resources to Initiate Successful Employment (RISE)*
- ◇ Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Pathway*
- ◇ Refugee with Special Employment Needs (RSEN) project*
- ◇ Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs
- ◇ AmeriCorps Programs
- ◇ Seattle Jobs Initiatives (SJI)
- ◇ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



PARTICIPATE

in "Workfare" by volunteering at a non-profit
The number of participation hours required is calculated by dividing the benefit amount by the state minimum wage (\$11/hour).

See the Appendix for:
Nonprofit Guide to Workfare

Key Points:



ABAWDs may only receive Basic Food for a total of 3 full months within the time period: **January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2017** unless they meet certain exemption criteria or work requirements.



The clock resets on **January 1, 2018** when all ABAWDs are re-eligible for benefits.



NEW IN 2017:

ALL counties are exempt from the time limit EXCEPT King County. Muckleshoot Reservation residents are also exempt.



If an ABAWD is cut off from benefits, they have to reapply for Basic Food and participate in employment, E&T, or Workfare to regain eligibility for benefits. Basic Food applications remain open for 60 days.

2016 Data³

In 2016, the first set of Basic Food recipients affected by this policy would have received benefits from January through March (3 months) and potentially lost benefits beginning on April 1, 2016.

BY THE NUMBERS

King County

5,306

5,432

Number of ABAWDs who lost Basic Food benefits beginning on April 1, 2016 for not meeting the work requirements.

Number of ABAWDs who were not participating in April 2016.

Washington State*

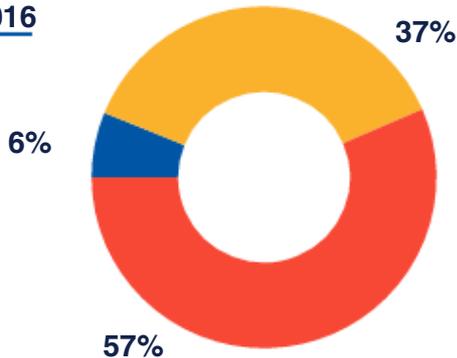
9,129

9,017

KING COUNTY ABAWDs

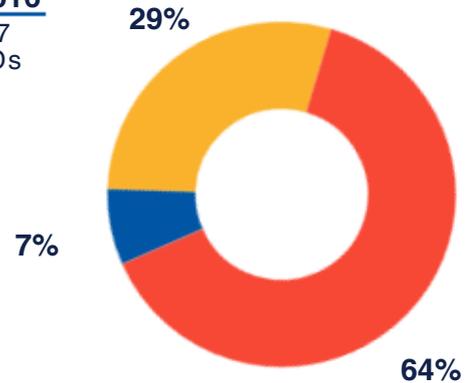
March 2016

24,560
ABAWDs
Total



April 2016

18,667
ABAWDs
Total



■ Participating**
 ■ Not participating
 ■ Exempt

ABAWD PROFILE^{***}



over 30% are **25-34** years old
62% male
30% have a prior felony conviction
64% were unemployed in the past 12 months

*King, Pierce, Snohomish Counties, except the cities of Tacoma and Lakewood

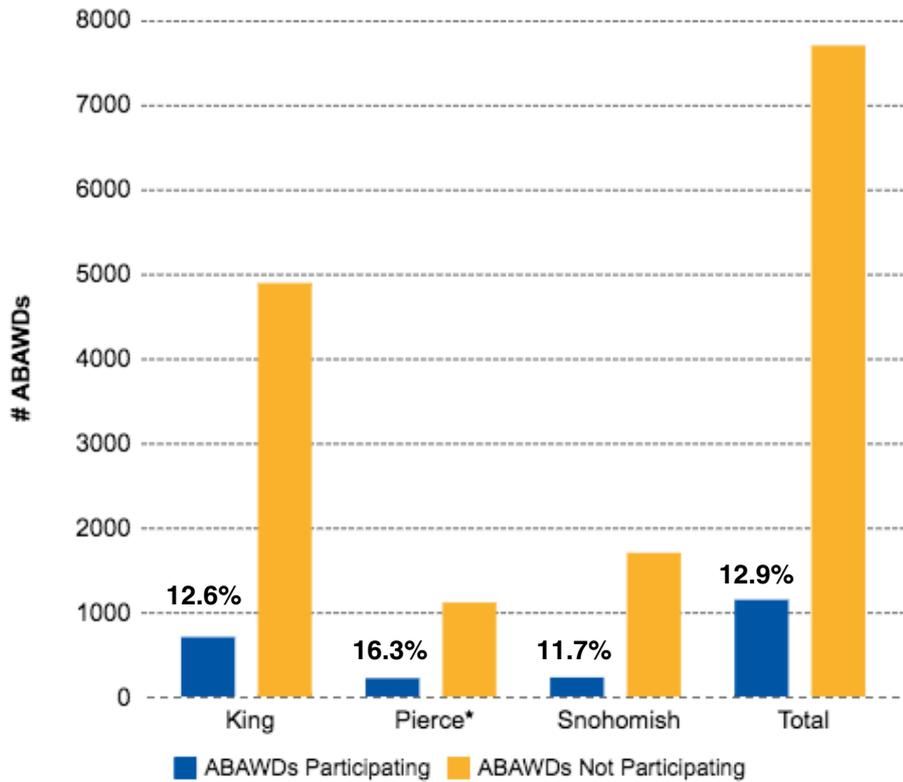
** Note: Participating means meeting the work requirements (employment, Workfare, employment & training program)

***March 2016; DSHS data included two options for Gender: female and male; Race/Ethnicity data unavailable

September 2016 Data³

Participation among Non-exempt ABAWDs

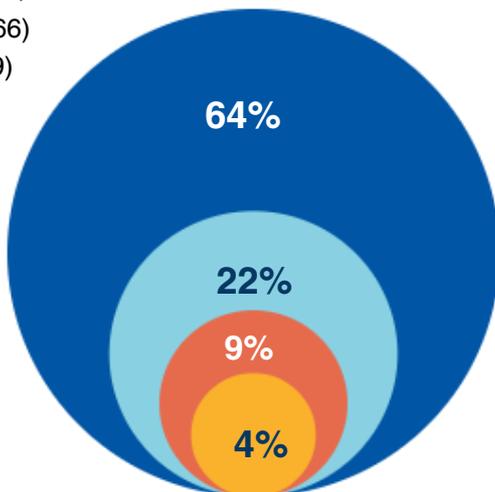
Total = 8,845



Types of Participation in King County

- Employed (452)
- Job Search (66)
- WorkFare (29)
- E&T (155)

Total = 702



36%
of ABAWDs in King County were exempt

87%
of non-exempt ABAWDs in King County did not satisfy the work requirements

13%
of non-exempt ABAWDs in King County satisfied the work requirement

BFET

According to DSHS, Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET):

“provides training and education with a goal of assisting Basic Food clients to attaining a living wage career. BFET services are available from all WA State community and technical colleges as well as many non-college community based organization (CBO) contractors.”

BFET is not exclusively for ABAWDs. All Basic Food recipients who are not participating in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) WorkFirst program and who are not receiving State Food Assistance Program (FAP) are eligible for BFET services. These services include:

- Assessment
- Case management
- Job readiness training
- Basic Education (e.g., high school equivalency)
- Vocational and industry-specific training
- Job search assistance
- Job placement
- Participant reimbursements (support services, such as transportation, child care, housing, clothing, and skill/wage progression)

BFET is funded on a "third-party reimbursement" model. The state provides half of the funds for the program, and programs are responsible for finding a match from a CBO for the other half. ⁸



The ultimate goal of BFET is financial independence from public assistance through skill acquisition, personal responsibility, and gainful employment.

King County CBOs with BFET Programs *

- Apprenticeship & Nontraditional Employment for Women (ANEW)
- Asian Counseling and Referral Services
- CARES of Washington
- Courage360 REACH Plus™ (Reaching Employability & Achieving Career Habits)
- FareStart
- King County Jobs Initiative
- Multiservice Center
- Neighborhood House of Washington (NHWA)
- Office of Refugee & Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)
- Port Jobs
- Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC)
- Refugee Federation Service Center (RFSC)
- Seattle Goodwill Industries (SGI)
- Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI)
- TRAC Associates
- World Relief
- YWCA of Seattle King County

*For the purpose of this report, only BFET programs at CBOs, not colleges, have been explored.

Findings

based on interviews with 11 CBO BFET providers ("CBOs") in King County

Challenges for BFET Providers

-  **Messaging**
inconsistent or confusing messaging from DSHS about work requirements or ABAWD classification
-  **Eligibility Criteria**
Participants must be receiving Basic Food before they can enroll; anyone (including ABAWDs) who has been recently terminated cannot enroll.
-  **Administratively "heavy"**
Required documentation and data tracking can be complicated and time consuming; different data required by DSHS vs. match funder
-  **Staff capacity**
limits program capacity, especially for those programs that are more case management-heavy.
-  **Housing and Transportation**
 - lack of affordable housing
 - funding for rent and utility assistance
 - additional funding for transportation
-  **"Volun-told"**
ABAWDs who are forced to comply with work requirements may not be as motivated about the opportunity as those who are participating voluntarily to improve their employment prospects.
-  **Additional Barriers to Work**
Participants with additional barriers to work (basic needs, life skills) who are eligible for the RISE program but were not selected (50% lottery) for it, end up in BFET.
-  **Communication with DSHS**
BFET providers meet quarterly and can submit questions to DSHS via a general email address, but response time could be improved.
-  **BFET Provider Referral Network**
It is hard to make referrals for participants that are not a good fit for a particular CBO's BFET program or who are interested in a specific industry without a comprehensive list of programs, services, and eligibility criteria.

"There needs to be an 'if this, do that' resource, a central location for BFET providers to reference [when making referrals]..."

-BFET program manager

Findings (2)

ABAWD Outreach

Over half of CBOs interviewed identified poor messaging and participant understanding as a barrier to recruitment and enrollment. This includes participants knowing:

- ◆ about the work requirements
- ◆ options for satisfying the work requirement and possibly feeling compelled to enroll in BFET although there are other options
- ◆ that they can choose from a variety of BFET programs which offer different services and levels of engagement (ie: case management vs. job search and interview preparation)
- ◆ the full benefits of a BFET program versus viewing it solely as a means to an end (Basic Food or other public benefits)

Resources

What agencies need to improve participation



Better outreach materials directed at ABAWDs to explain why Workfare could be beneficial for them



Communication

- with DSHS about policy changes or to follow up on participant referrals
- with other volunteer coordinators at Workfare agencies to exchange best practices, advice, etc.



Transportation

funding for bus passes or gas cards



Funding

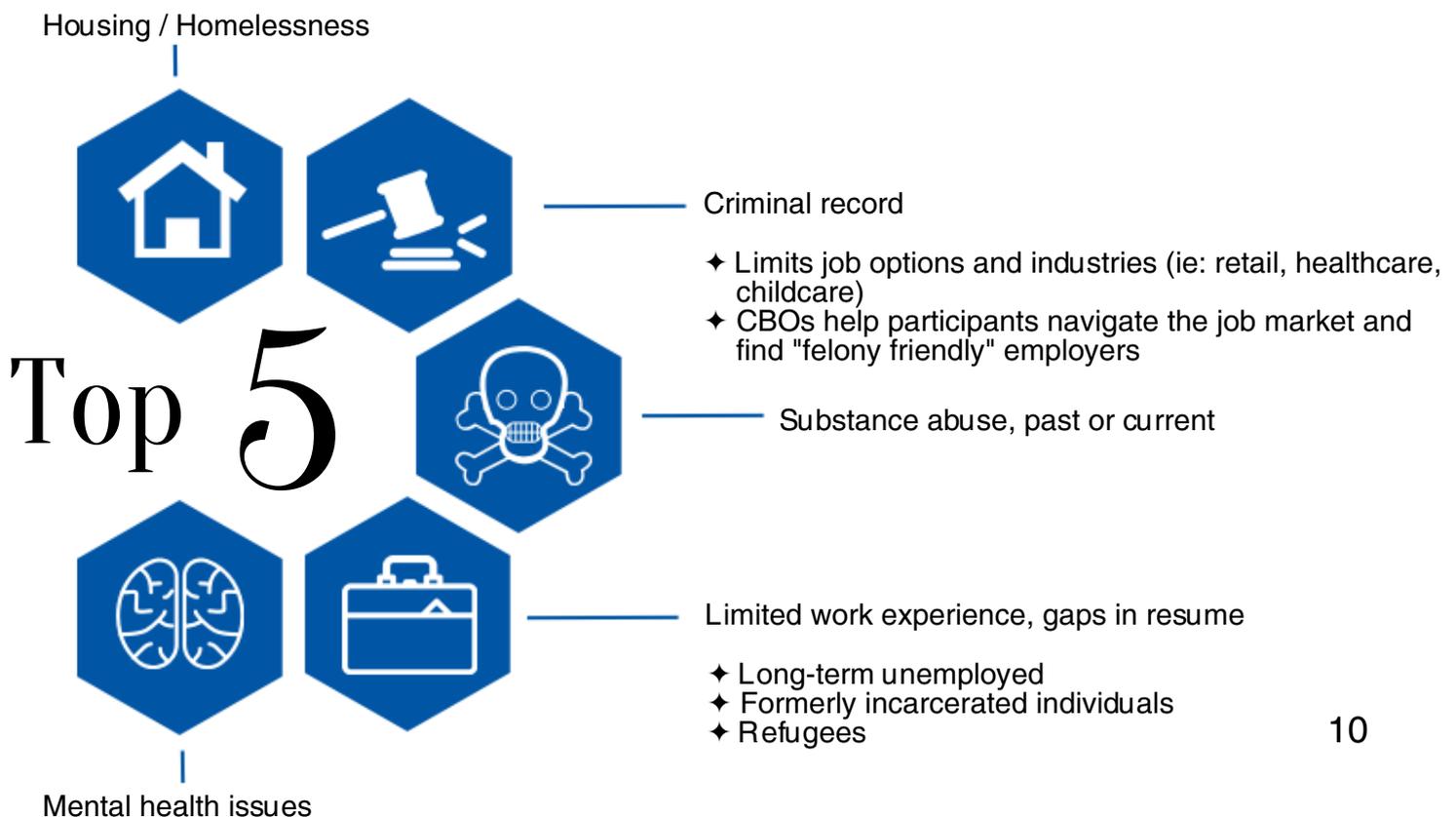
for emergency rent/utility assistance, transportation, professional clothing



Staff training

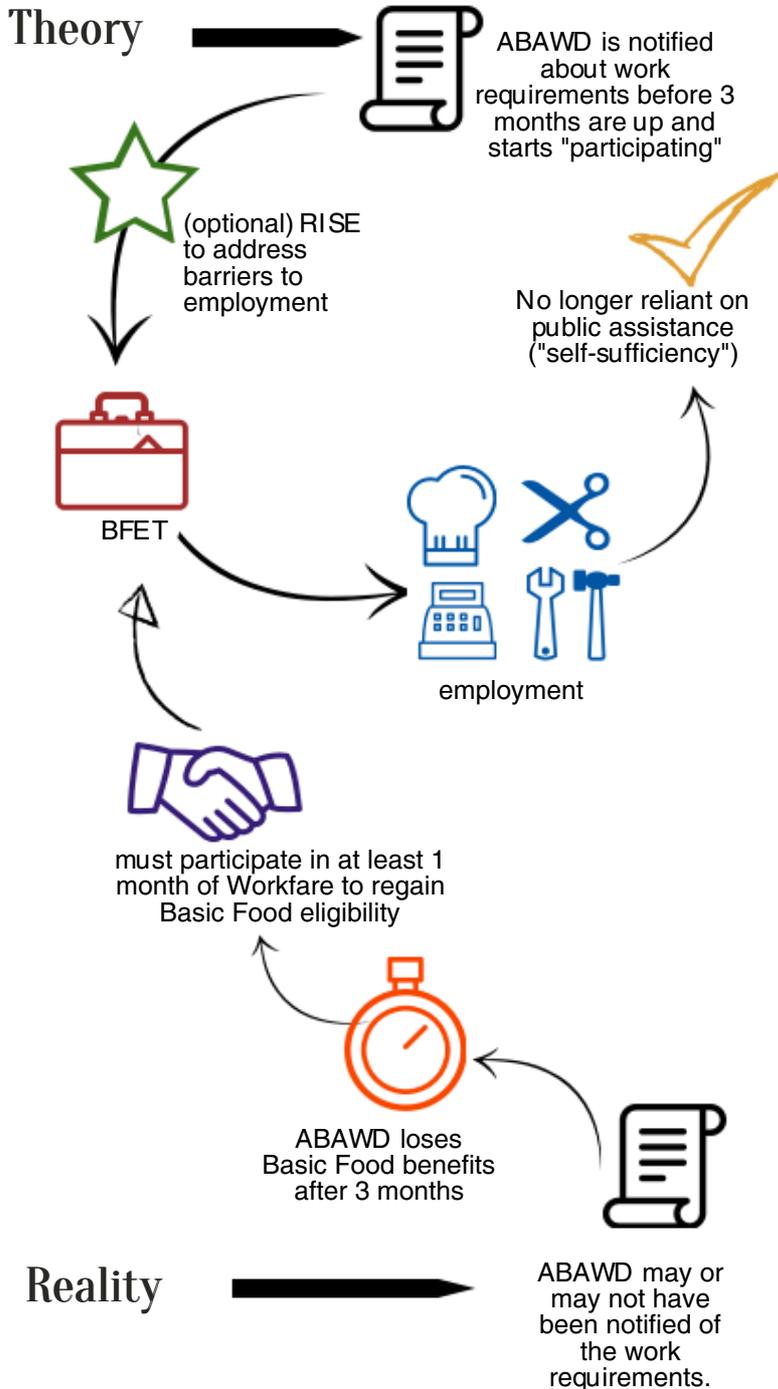
educating staff about ABAWDs and Workfare

Barriers to Job Placement



Findings (3)

The ABAWD Cycle



Eligibility

To be eligible for BFET, an ABAWD must be receiving Basic Food benefits.

For the thousands of ABAWDs in King County whose benefits were terminated after 3-month time because they didn't meet the work requirements, this leaves only 2 options:

- ◆ finding or increasing hours of employment
- ◆ Workfare
- ◆ Qualifying for an exemption

They cannot enroll directly into BFET.

Churning

ABAWDs "churn" in and out of Basic Food eligibility for a variety of reasons, including:

- ◆ falling short of the required participation hours
- ◆ losing a job or losing hours at an existing job
- ◆ gaining a survival job which puts them just over income cut offs for Basic Food
- ◆ failing to submit verification of meeting the work requirement to DSHS

Some CBOs have noted that an ABAWD who loses Basic Food eligibility one month will disappear from the eJAS database. When they are eligible again, their name will reappear in the system.

This disrupts the continuity of care and case management services they are able to provide to that individual.

RISE

RISE is a 3 year (December 2015 - September 2018) pilot program SNAP E&T pilot program. The \$22 million dollar program is fully funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service.⁴

RISE is designed for Basic Food recipients in the following target populations:

- homeless
- veteran
- unemployed for 1 year or more
- limited English proficiency (LEP)
- non-custodial parent owing arrears

who also have one critical barrier:

- mental/physical health
- domestic violence
- chemical dependency
- child welfare
- criminal history affecting employability

and, in addition, 3 or more stand alone barriers

- housing
- "resource deficiencies" (ie: transportation, child care, etc.)
- "skill deficiencies"
- learning disability
- special needs child
- negative or lack of employment history
- high school equivalency/diploma
- LEP
- child support arrears
- veterans discharge status

Eligible participants are randomly assigned to RISE or BFET groups (50/50 for participants age 18 and up). 7,000 participants are expected to benefit from RISE services during the 3 year pilot.

BFET vs. RISE

Unlike BFET, which aims to place participants in jobs by the end of the program, RISE provides a more flexible timeline, case management focused on barrier reduction, and 'Strategies for Success' training to prepare participants for Work Based Learning (paid internships) and eventually a stable career path.

Work Based Learning provides a unique opportunity for a participant to gain experience in a field that they are interested in. Some participants are hired at the end of the internship.



"The RISE Project has been designed to fill the gap currently experienced by BFET participants who face multiple barriers and lack the needed work experience to obtain employment resulting in self-sufficiency."

"RISE is like BFET on steroids."

- RISE program manager

Findings

based on interviews with 5 CBO RISE providers ("CBOs") in King County

Top 5 Challenges



Stringent Eligibility Criteria

- Participants must be receiving Basic Food before they can enroll; anyone who has been recently terminated cannot enroll. Ideally, participants are recruited before they have lost benefits.
- Participants must have multiple barriers to work and the right combination of barriers
- On top of that, only 50% of eligible participants are enrolled into RISE

"The theory behind it is awesome...but sometimes people that are perfect for RISE are weeded out [through the lottery system]."

- RISE case manager



Lack of Effective Recruitment Strategies

RISE participants are a hard to reach population. DSHS provides a list of potential participants (work registrants) to CBOs. Cold calls or direct mailings are generally not successful if participants don't already have a relationship with the CBO.

Other strategies include:

- tabling at resource fairs
- outreach at homeless shelters



Communication with DSHS

Response time to questions and consistency of answers could be improved.



Staff capacity

Since RISE is more case-management heavy, staff capacity can limit the number of participants served.



Homelessness and Substance Abuse

Resources needed



Transitional and Permanent Housing

Workfare

Workfare involves unpaid, volunteer work at a non-profit, public, or government agency. ⁵

In theory, ABAWDs who lost Basic Food benefits for not meeting the work requirements would participate in Workfare for at least 1 month to regain their benefits and become eligible for an Employment & Training program.

Participants must receive an official referral from DSHS in order to participate.

"OUR WORKFARE PARTICIPANTS HAVE ADDED A LOT...WE'VE COME TO RELY ON THEM."

- Food Bank Volunteer Manager

2016 Workfare Host Agencies in King County

Non-profits must complete a contract with DSHS in order to become a certified Workfare host agency.

- Alzheimers Association
- Asian Counseling and Referral Services
- Auburn Food Bank
- Bailey-Boushay House
- Chief Seattle Club
- Co Lam Temple
- Earthcorps
- Elizabeth Gregory House
- Enumclaw Kiwanis Food Bank
- Hunger Intervention Program
- Iraqi Community Center Seattle
- Issaquah Food Bank
- Multiservice Center
- New Horizons
- North Helpline Food Bank
- Peoples Harm Reduction Alliance
- Pike Market Food Bank
- Port Jobs
- Puget Sound Labor Agency
- Puget Sound Training Center
- Rainier Valley Food Bank
- Salvation Army - Pike Market SS Seattle
- Snoqualmie Valley Food Bank
- St. Elizabeth Hospital - Enumclaw
- Tukwila Pantry
- Valley Cities
- University District Food Bank

Why it matters

Based on studies of Workfare as a component of TANF work requirements, Workfare is not effective in achieving its goals of decreasing financial "self-sufficiency." ⁶



Firstly, Workfare does not provide an income. ABAWDs receive no cash assistance to provide for basic needs outside of food, like housing.



Secondly, there is little evidence to support that Workfare increases employment prospects. A study of WA TANF recipients showed Workfare placements increased employment by only 13 per cent in 1999 when the state unemployment rate was 4.9%. It is not a stretch to imagine similar outcomes extrapolating to 2015, when the the state unemployment rate was 5.7%.⁷

While each host site is different, there are no standard requirements (or resources) for sites to provide participants with support services or skills and experiences that may be transferable to the job market. In fact, some studies have shown that it can reduce employment chances by limiting time available for job search. ⁶

However, Workfare is important as an interim solution for the thousands of ABAWDs who have been or will be cut off from Basic Food.

Of the 3 ways to meet the work requirements, Workfare is the only one that immediately allows participants cut off from Basic Food to regain benefits the month that they start working.

For employment or E&T programs, participation one month equates to benefits the *following* month (upon completion of the required number of hours).

In addition, ABAWDs must be receiving Basic Food benefits to even be eligible for an E&T program. This means that ABAWDs who do not start an E&T program before their 3 months are up will likely have to participate in Workfare for at least one month to regain benefits and transition to E&T.

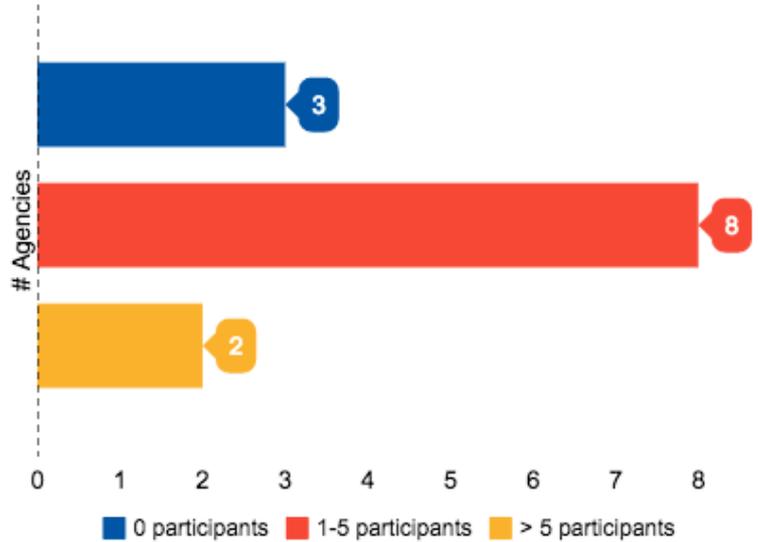
Findings

based on interviews with 14 Workfare Host Agencies ("Agencies") in King County

85%

of agencies had less than 5 participants in 2016, including 3 agencies that had no participants.

2016 Participation Rates



Top 7 Barriers to Participation

Why agencies think there is low Workfare participation



Transportation



Scheduling

- length and availability of shifts
- rush to get hours in by end of the month
- scheduling around one ore more jobs
- sign up process (ie: Internet connection required)



DSHS Referral Required

CBOs cannot accept participants directly; waiting for or following up on an official referral could be a barrier.



Messaging

Inconsistent or confusing messaging from DSHS about work requirements



Staff Capacity



Perceived Low ROI

Workfare does not provide an income or path to employment.



"Conflict of Interest"

Some agencies were uncomfortable with allowing their own clients to serve as Workfare participants at the same site

Findings (2)



Seattle Workfare participant
age: 30s
race: white
gender: male

"When I'm ready, when I'm really up for it, hopefully, well I was thinking of starting a grocery store with cashing and cashiering.

I haven't worked in several years. It's nice that I've been volunteering here and paving the way for different things. There's that and/or some of the employment training programs, I'm thinking I will want to explore some of those other things...

I want to work, I intend to work."

Resources

What agencies need to improve participation



Better outreach materials
directed at ABAWDs to explain why Workfare could be beneficial for them



Transportation
funding for bus passes or gas cards



Communication
• with DSHS about policy changes or to follow up on participant referrals
• with other volunteer coordinators at Workfare agencies to exchange best practices, advice, etc.



Funding
for up front costs like participant background checks



Staff training
educating staff about ABAWDs and Workfare

The most common concern among agencies was a lack of transparency in the Workfare process and agency expectations.

There is a need for direct and consistent communication with DSHS.

For example, many agencies not involved with anti-hunger advocacy were unaware that there were new county waivers in 2017 which resulted in over 15,000 ABAWDs becoming exempt from the work requirements, and by extension, Workfare.

"WE FAX IT [to DSHS] AND HOPE FOR THE BEST..."

-Workfare agency staff member

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings above, I propose United Way of King County support ABAWDs in the following ways:



OUTREACH and CAPACITY BUILDING

- ❑ **Expand United Way's Housing Ready & Crisis Resilient (R&R) AmeriCorps team responsibilities to include**
 - screening for ABAWD status
 - screening for work requirement exemptions
 - informing non-exempt ABAWDs about BFET opportunities and soft referrals to BFET programs that cater to their interests and meet their needs

at community colleges, RAPs, and Free Tax Preparation sites where we have already established relations with these institutions as well as local DSHS Offices.

R&R members could also conduct outreach and benefits enrollment at:

- CBOs with BFET programs, especially during program orientations that draw large crowds of ABAWD and other individuals eligible for public benefits.
- local DSHS Offices

This would increase DSHS' capacity to identify these individuals who should be exempt and prevent them from losing Basic Food benefits.

Additionally, identifying ABAWDs could lead to targeted outreach and a concerted effort to re-enroll ABAWDs who have previously lost Basic Food benefits due to not meeting the work requirements ("non-participation")

- ❑ **Conduct outreach to United Way grantees and community partners** to encourage non-profits to enroll as Workfare host agencies with DSHS to expand the diversity of Workfare opportunities.
 - *See Appendix for the "Nonprofit Guide to Workfare."*
- ❑ **Create a document or resource to make referrals to BFET programs more efficient.**

There are a variety of E&T programs, but the diversity of offerings can make navigating options difficult and time consuming. A document that details the type of services offered, eligibility requirements, and other factors about each program could guide service providers to an appropriate BFET program that best fits the needs and wants of their client would be useful.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED



ADVOCACY

- ❑ **Join the ABAWD Workgroup and support existing campaigns to improve services for ABAWDs** such as:
 - Redesigning notification postcards sent to ABAWDs in the mail using easy to understand language and instructions
 - Establish “Comparable Workfare” options (see below)
 - Make exemptions for people experiencing homelessness easier
 - See “Massachusetts Exemption Supplement” in Appendix

- ❑ **Recommend DSHS adopt “Comparable Workfare” as an acceptable form of participation.**

Relying on DSHS to refer Workfare participants to Workfare agencies and requiring those agencies to apply for certification ahead of time can be limiting.

Comparable Workfare would allow a participant to get approval for hours volunteered at a non-profit of their choice, including religious congregations that they may already be serving at, without an official referral and without the organization being “pre-approved” by DSHS.

This could help an ABAWD maintain their Basic Food eligibility and prevent gaps in coverage. It also could make Workfare more appealing if an ABAWD already has a trusted relationship with a non-profit in their community.

- ❑ **Recommend DSHS put forth greater effort in matching Workfare participants and agencies and following up on referrals.**

Matching participants based on location, skill sets, language abilities, familiarity or interest in organization’s work, and other factors can ensure a better fit for both participant and agency.

Many agencies received calls from DSHS informing them a referral had been made, but few participants reached out to the agency to schedule a volunteer shift. DSHS should be more actively involved with these referrals.



FUNDING

- ❑ **Continue to invest and and explore opportunities for funding BFET programs.**

BFET programs rely on 50% match funding from community organizations to support their programs. United Way provides funding for programs like FareStart and YWCA and should continue to invest in and explore more opportunities to support these programs financially. Unrestricted funding to provide emergency rental and utility assistance, clothing, transportation, and other resources would be especially useful.

- ❑ **Fund legal aid organizations to collaborate with BFET and RISE programs.**

Additional funding should be directed at providing legal aid services, particularly, vacating and sealing to BFET participants. Vacating and sealing can clear criminal history records for some people. Criminal records were identified by BFET providers as the second biggest barrier to employment, surpassed only by affordable housing. In addition, support legislation to “ban the box” and increase work opportunities for people in re-entry.

- ❑ **Provide small grants to Workfare host agencies to cover participant costs.**

DSHS currently does not provide any resources to agencies. Funding could cover costs of background checks (required by some nonprofits of all volunteers) and to provide transportation vouchers for Workfare participants. Given current rates of participation in Workfare, this could be a relatively small investment for United Way, but the impact could be preventing an ABAWD from losing their Basic Food benefits.

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RECOMMENDATIONS for UNITED WAY OF KING COUNTY to help ABAWDs maintain Basic Food benefits

Issue Summary

Under current Washington State law, thousands of adults in King County are in danger of losing their Basic Food benefits if they don't meet certain exemption criteria or work requirements. Workfare and Employment & Training are two ways these adults (ABAWDs) can satisfy the requirements.

Why It Matters

Not only does SNAP help millions of people and families put food on the table, it boosts the economy: every \$5 in SNAP results in \$9 in economic activity. In order to support ABAWDs and ensure the continuity of SNAP assistance, it is important to understand the unique challenges they face in securing stable employment and living wages.

Key Terms

- ABAWD: able-bodied adult without dependents
- BFET: Basic Food Employment & Training, a state-sponsored program
- CBO: Community-based organization, referring to CBO-contracted BFET programs
- Workfare: an option for ABAWDs to perform unpaid work at a certified nonprofit or public organization

Recommendations

OUTREACH and CAPACITY BUILDING

- ❑ **Expand United Way's Housing Ready & Crisis Resilient (R&R) AmeriCorps team responsibilities** to include
 - screening for ABAWD status
 - screening for work requirement exemptions
 - informing non-exempt ABAWDs about BFET opportunities and soft referrals to BFET programs that cater to their interests and meet their needsat community colleges, RAPs, and Free Tax Preparation sites where we have already established relations with these institutions as well as local DSHS Offices.

R&R members could also conduct outreach and benefits enrollment at:
 - CBOs with BFET programs, especially during program orientations that draw large crowds of ABAWD and other individuals eligible for public benefits.
 - local DSHS Offices
- ❑ **Conduct outreach to United Way grantees and community partners** to encourage non-profits to enroll as Workfare host agencies with DSHS to expand the diversity of Workfare opportunities.
- ❑ **Create a document or resource to make referrals to BFET programs more efficient.**

ADVOCACY

- ❑ **Join the ABAWD Workgroup and support existing campaigns to improve services for ABAWDs** such as:
 - Redesigning notification postcards sent to ABAWDs in the mail using easy to understand language and instructions
 - Establish "Comparable Workfare" options (see below)
 - Make exemptions for people experiencing homelessness easier to process
- ❑ **Recommend DSHS adopt "Comparable Workfare" as an acceptable form of participation.**
- ❑ **Recommend DSHS put forth greater effort in matching Workfare participants and agencies and following up on referrals.**

FUNDING

- ❑ **Continue to invest and explore opportunities for funding BFET programs.**
- ❑ **Fund legal aid organizations to collaborate with BFET programs to clear criminal records of participants.**
- ❑ **Provide small grants to Workfare host agencies to cover participant costs.**

Massachusetts Exemption Supplement

The following page shows a Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance's "Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption Supplement" form for people ages 18-49 who are experiencing homelessness.

This form was included in the Appendix as an example of a streamlined process (a one-page form) to quickly exempt people experiencing homelessness from SNAP work requirements. A similar form could be used in Washington State to expedite the process.

NOTE: This does not show requirements for the homeless exemption.

All people experiencing homelessness who are unable to/unfit for work or have additional barriers to work are exempt.

DSHS cannot require a particular type or form of verification that an ABAWD is unable to work.



Give this form to DTA

- By Mail: DTA Document Processing Center, P.O. Box 4406, Taunton, MA 02780-0420
- By fax: (617) 887-8765
- In person at your local DTA office

**Request for ABAWD Work
Program Exemption Supplement**
For homeless people ages 18 to 49

As a homeless individual, you might be exempt from the ABAWD Work Program requirement. Use this form to tell us about your situation so we can determine if you are exempt. Give the completed form to DTA. If you have questions or need help, call DTA at (877) 382-2363.

Section 1: Client Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Agency ID or Last 4 digits of SSN: _____

Section 2: Check the box next to your response to each question below.

1) Do you have a stable night time residence?

- Yes No I prefer not to answer

2) Do you have a high school diploma or equivalency (GED or HiSet)?

- Yes No I prefer not to answer

3) During the last 3 years, have you been steadily employed for at least 6 months or a full-time student for at least 6 months?

- Yes No I prefer not to answer

4) Do you regularly access health care that you need, such as dental care, psychiatric care, and treatment for an ongoing illness?

- Yes No I prefer not to answer

5) Have you been hospitalized during the last 6 months?

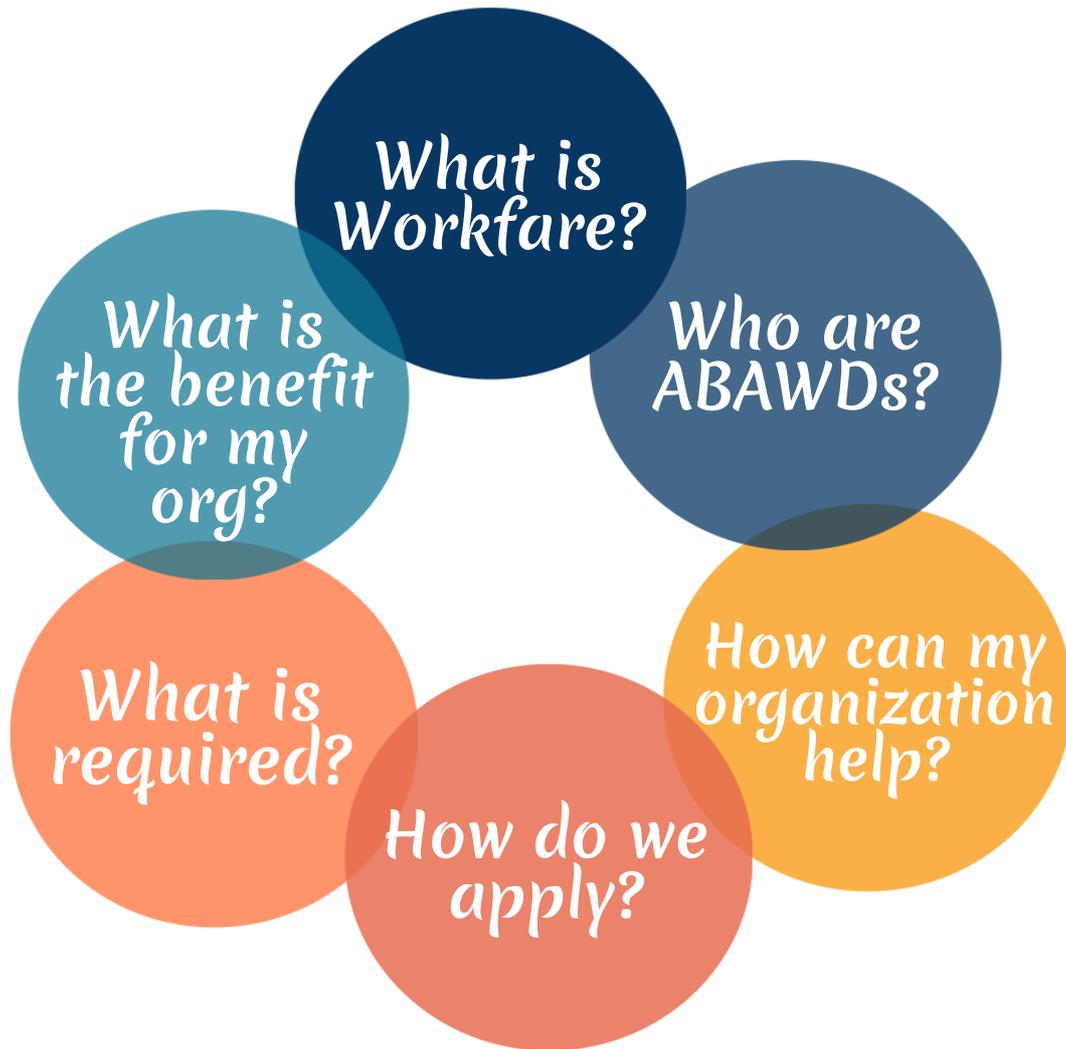
- Yes No I prefer not to answer

Section 3: Signature

Signature _____ Date _____

The Nonprofit Guide to Workfare

Connecting Able-bodied Adults without Dependents
to Basic Food benefits in King County, WA



February 2017



United Way of King County

Summary

This guide is intended for King County non-profits and social service providers.

Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) in King County are a specific subset of Basic Food (also called SNAP or food stamps) recipients who must meet certain work requirements.

Participating in Workfare (unpaid work at a non-profit) can help these adults maintain their Basic Food benefits and improve their employment prospects.

Providing a Workfare participant with volunteer opportunities can be a meaningful experience for your non-profit. Not only are you gaining an additional volunteer to support your organization's work, you are also providing a meaningful volunteer work experience for participants.

Objectives:

- ❖ Understand who ABAWDs are and why they are in need of volunteer opportunities
- ❖ Gain more insight into Basic Food policy and 2017 guidelines
- ❖ Learn how your non-profit organization can become a DSHS- certified Workfare host agency
- ❖ Discover how Workfare can benefit your organization

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Frequently Asked Questions

Background

The Policy

Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) may only receive Basic Food (SNAP/EBT/food stamps) for 3 months within a 36-month period unless they meet certain work requirements or exemption criteria. Most states have had waivers on this time limit policy due to economic circumstances and high unemployment.

 Unless they meet certain exemption criteria or work requirements, ABAWDs may only receive Basic Food (SNAP/EBT/food stamps) for a total of 3 full months within the time period: **January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2017**

Everyone is on the same 36 month timeline that resets on January 1, 2018.

NEW IN 2017:

ALL counties are exempt from the time limit EXCEPT King County.

Muckleshoot Tribal Reservation residents are also exempt.



Satisfying the Work Requirements

ABAWDs who are not exempt from the time limit policy can satisfy the work requirement in one or a combination of 3 ways:



WORK

at least 80 hours/month
This includes in-kind work (work for goods and services) and rental income, based on the actual number of hours the client works.



ENROLL

in one of several state approved employment and training programs for 80 hours/month

ie: BFET, RISE



PARTICIPATE

in Workfare by volunteering at a non-profit organization

Who is an ABAWD?

- an adult in the 18-49 age range
- receiving Basic Food assistance (SNAP)
- NOT disabled
- NOT pregnant
- NOT living in an assistance unit with minor children

Exemptions

The time limit and work requirements do **NOT** apply to ABAWDs who:



- live **outside of** King County or on the Muckleshoot Reservation
- live in an assistance unit with a minor child
- have been chronically homeless with "additional barriers to work"



- care for a disabled or elderly person who cannot care for themselves
- participate in a drug or alcohol treatment program



- are physically or mentally unable to work 20 hours/week on average



- are students enrolled at least half time in high school or college



- are applying for or receiving unemployment benefits
- are receiving disability-based benefits (SSI, SSDI, ABD, Worker Comp, etc.)
- are receiving Refugee Cash Assistance benefits or Matching Grant Funds



- 15% Exemption: FNS allocates a 15% exemption to states to use as they see fit.

In 2016, WA State was granted 11,530 exemptions. This exemption category was used for participants of the RISE study, ABAWDs who were not informed of the participation requirements before their 3 months began accruing, and ABAWDs who were not given 10 days notice before losing benefits due to non-participation.

DSHS cannot require a particular type or form of verification that an ABAWD is unable to work.

Workfare Process for Participants



ABAWDs interested in volunteering contact DSHS through the customer service call center at 1-877-501-2233 and ask to learn more about Workfare.



An ABAWD team member will assist in finding a Workfare agency in the area. If the ABAWD already has one in mind, the team member will either assist them with a formal referral or contact the agency to ensure they can host a volunteer.



The ABAWD will receive an official referral letter from DSHS detailing:

- the Workfare agency
- contact information for the supervisor at the agency
- number of hours required to meet their monthly requirement
- the date they are expected to participate by



The participant is responsible for contacting the Workfare agency and scheduling their shifts.



The participant is responsible for getting their DSHS 01-205 Workfare Activity Report signed and submitted monthly as verification of meeting their hourly requirement.

NOTE:

- DSHS will refer Workfare participants looking for opportunities to you. It is up to the individual participant to reach out to your organization to schedule a volunteer opportunity.
- Workfare sites are not required to conduct outreach.
- Participants must have an official referral from DSHS in order for their hours to count.

The number of participation hours required is determined by the benefit amount and the state minimum wage.

The state minimum wage as of January 1, 2017 is \$11/hour.

Example:



Bill is an ABAWD who receives \$115 in Basic Food benefits each month.

$$115 \div 11 = 10.45 \text{ hours}$$

Bill must participate in 10 hours (rounded down) of workfare per month.

Workfare Host Agencies

What is a Workfare host agency?

A non-profit or public agency which

- allows a participant to work under supervision and direction to gain valuable work experience and meet Basic Food work requirements
- does not replace full time or part time employee positions or fill vacancies with unpaid workfare labor
- does not place participants on an assignment that is a result of a labor dispute
- provides a safe working environment free of health and safety hazards in keeping with the rules and regulations for paid employees. This means an environment free from sexual, racial, religious, gender and other harassment.

Expectations



REGISTER

Complete a contract with DSHS that certifies your organization as an official Workfare site. See page 8.



VERIFY

Sign off on your ABAWD volunteer's "Workfare Activity Report" each month. See page 9.



NOTIFY

Get in touch with the DSHS ABAWD Specialized Team if there are any issues with the Workfare arrangement.

Benefits

- Create a meaningful work experience for a participant and improve their employment prospects
- Provide an opportunity for participants to regain or maintain their Basic Food benefits
- Gain additional volunteers and increase the capacity of your organization

FAQs

APPLYING TO BE A WORKFARE HOST AGENCY

▶ Why should my organization apply to be a Workfare host agency?

- Create a meaningful work experience for a participant and improve their employment prospects
- Ensure a participant can regain or maintain their Basic Food benefits
- Gain additional volunteers and increase the capacity of your organization

▶ What is required in the Workfare host application?

The application includes:

- Form 09-866 Basic Food Volunteer Workfare Agreement
- Additional documents describing the number of volunteer spots available, volunteer days/times, activities to be performed, and other considerations like having to pass a background check.

▶ Who do I contact to apply?

Contact the DSHS ABAWD Specialized Team by emailing JobHelp@dshs.wa.gov

▶ How long will it take?

The estimated turnaround time for new contracts is one to two weeks.

▶ If my organization previously applied and was accepted as a Workfare agency in 2016, do we have to reapply in 2017?

You may need to renew your contract depending on the end date of the original. If you are located in an area that becomes exempt, DSHS will contact you to end the contract.

▶ If I cannot provide enough volunteer hours for participants to meet their requirements, should I still apply?

Yes. Workfare participants can fulfill their monthly requirement for work or volunteer hours by combining hours from multiple Workfare sites. They can also combine two types of approved activities, such as work and Workfare, to meet the required number of participation hours.

▶ What resources are available to my organization to support Workfare participants?

DSHS does not currently provide any financial compensation or resources (ie: transportation, background checks) to Workfare agencies for participants.

DSHS does pay for Labor & Industries (L&I) insurance for participants.

WORKFARE PARTICIPANTS

▶ Can I recruit Workfare participants?

You can recruit workfare participants, though agencies are not required to conduct outreach and recruitment. If you do recruit, participants must get an official referral from DSHS in order for their hours to count.

▶ What if a potential Workfare participant approaches my organization without being referred by DSHS?

You should advise the participant to contact DSHS for a referral. They can:

- Visit their local DSHS Community Services Office (CSO)
- call the DSHS Customer Contact Service Center at 1-877-501-2233
- email DSHS at jobhelp@dshs.wa.gov.

▶ Do I have to report a Workfare participant if they miss a shift?

If your workfare participant has missed several shifts, it is a good idea to notify DSHS so that a case manager can find a better fit for the participant.

▶ If I notify DSHS, does that mean that participants' Basic Food benefits will be terminated?

Notifying DSHS does not necessarily mean benefits will be cut off instantly. DSHS will first try to find out why the participant is not showing up and try to find another Workfare organization or BFET program that suits their needs. Participants will lose benefits if they do not meet the required number of hours 2 months in a row.

▶ What if my participant had a good reason for missing their shift?

A participant can claim "good cause" for not meeting their hours if the reason for their absence was beyond their controls. Examples include: being sick, transportation broke down, bad weather shut down the workplace/host agency. They will need to check in with DSHS to ensure their "good cause" claim was accepted.

▶ What if my participant is homeless or appears unable to work?

ABAWDs who are "chronically homeless" or have a physical or mental impairment that prevents them from working full-time are eligible for an exemption from the work requirement policy. You should encourage the participant to call DSHS at 1-877-501-2233.

▶ Are there appeal rights?

Every Basic Food recipient has the right to ask for an administrative hearing to challenge any DSHS decision they disagree with including termination of benefits for allegedly not meeting ABAWD work requirements. "Good cause" is a basis for appeal. Legal help can be found by calling

- 2-1-1 (King County)
- CLEAR (statewide) at 1-888-201-1014.

NOTE: If a participant requests an administrative hearing, they will continue to receive benefits and their 3 month clock is paused until there is a hearing decision. If the hearing decision goes against the participant, they may have to pay back some of the benefits money received while the hearing was pending.

Contact Information



DSHS Economic Services Administration website:
<http://bit.ly/WADSHSABAWD>



jobhelp@dshs.wa.gov



Customer Contact Service Center: 1-877-501-2233



Visit your local Community Services Office



About United Way of King County:

United Way of King County is a 501(c)3 organization working together to build a community where people have homes, students graduate, and families are financially stable.



United Way of King County

720 Second Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

206.461.3700



Instagram



Facebook



Twitter



LinkedIn

Special thanks to:

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Basic Food Volunteer Workfare Agreement

This agreement is between the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and

WORKFARE HOST AGENCY

AGENCY CONTACT'S NAME

PHONE NUMBER (INCLUDE AREA CODE)

AGENCY ADDRESS

A. Purpose

The purpose of this agreement is to set work site standards and procedures for the placement of ABAWDs with the above named Workfare Host Agency to provide meaningful, voluntary work experience to Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) who choose to participate in Workfare to remain eligible for Basic Food benefits (Workfare Participants).

Entity's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN):

Entity type (check the appropriate box):

- County
 City
 School
 Federal agency
 State agency
 Private non-profit
 Public non-profit
 Indian tribe
 Other (specify):

B. Labor & Industries Worker's Compensation Insurance

DSHS shall pay the cost of worker's compensation insurance to the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) for the hours worked by the Workfare Participant. The Department of Labor and Industries does not guarantee that its worker's compensation coverage provides full immunity from tort claim liability. In any case, DSHS does not assume any liability for any injury to or death of a Workfare Participant while on the job.

C. Scope of Agreement

The Workfare Host Agency agrees to:

- Provide Workfare Participants with volunteer work opportunities of up to sixteen hours per month to the extent work is available.
- Review work procedures with the Workfare Participant for a clear understanding of what is expected while doing the volunteer work;
- Not replace existing staff or reduce existing staff hours or pay with volunteer workers;
- Abide by all local, state, and federal regulations including but not limited to non-discrimination and labor rights;
- Complete the Basic Food Workfare Activity Report, DSHS 01-205, to verify the number of hours the Workfare Participant volunteered.

D. Termination and Acceptance of Agreement

This agreement may be terminated by either party upon 30 calendar days advanced written notice to the other party at the email address below.

The signatures below certify that each party has read this agreement, understands it, and accepts the terms and conditions defined in this agreement.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED WORKFARE HOST AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE		DATE	TELEPHONE NUMBER (WITH AREA CODE)
PRINT NAME HERE	TITLE		EMAIL ADDRESS
SIGNATURE OF DSHS REPRESENTATIVE		DATE	TELEPHONE NUMBER
PRINT NAME HERE	TITLE		EMAIL ADDRESS

Basic Food Workfare Activity Report

CLIENT'S NAME	CLIENT NUMBER
WORKER'S NAME	COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICE (CSO)
<p>Workfare is a way for Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) to stay eligible for Basic Food benefits, by providing unpaid work for a public or non-profit private agency (community organizations, schools, etc.).</p> <p>CLIENT INSTRUCTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take this form to the community Workfare agency each month, to verify the number of hours that you worked in Workfare for that month. • You have to turn in the monthly form no later than 10 days after you complete your minimum Workfare hours. • You must complete at least 16 hours of volunteer work each month to stay eligible for your Basic Food benefits. If your Basic Food benefits are less than \$152 per month, then your minimum Workfare hours may be less than 16 per month. • This form must be completed and signed by a Workfare agency only. Agencies must also complete the Workfare agreement (DSHS form 09-866) at least once per year. • Turn this completed form in to DSHS by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Faxing to 1-888-338-7410; or ○ Taking it to your local Community Services Office (CSO); or ○ Mailing to: DSHS CSD Customer Service Center PO Box 11699 Tacoma, WA 98411-6699 	
<p>CERTIFYING COMMUNITY SERVICE WORKFARE AGENCY:</p> <p>The person named above must meet ABAWD work requirements to receive Basic Food benefits. One way to meet this requirement is through Workfare.</p> <p>Please complete and sign the statement below to verify the number of hours the above named individual provided volunteer work. Thank you for your assistance.</p> <p>I certify that _____ did _____ hours of unpaid work during <small style="margin-left: 40px;">CLIENT NAME</small> <small style="margin-left: 150px;">NUMBER OF HOURS</small></p> <p>the month of _____. <small style="margin-left: 40px;">MONTH, YEAR</small></p>	
<p>Please note that where the Workfare Host Agency has completed, signed and submitted a Basic Food Volunteer Workfare Agreement, DSHS 09-866, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) will pay the cost of industrial insurance coverage for the Workfare Participant. The Department of Labor and Industries cannot provide assurances that worker's compensation coverage provides full immunity from tort claim liability. In any case, DSHS does not assume liability for any injury to or death of a Workfare Participant while on the job.</p>	
SIGNATURE	DATE
NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	TELEPHONE NUMBER
TITLE	EMAIL ADDRESS
AGENCY'S NAME	

COPIES TO: Provider; Financial Services Specialist; Client

BASIC FOOD WORKFARE ACTIVITY REPORT
DSHS 01-205 (REV. 02/2016)



01205