



CalFresh: Work Registration and ABAWD in Humboldt County

What is CalFresh Work Registration?

CalFresh Work Registration is a long-standing requirement of receiving CalFresh benefits. All applicants must be reviewed to see if they have an exemption for CalFresh Work Registration, or if they are mandatory for the requirement.

CalFresh recipients who meet one of the following exemptions would not be a work registrant:

- Under age 16
- Over age 59
- Taking care of a child under 6
- Caring for a person with a disability
- Working at least 30 hours a week
- Earning more than \$217.50 per week (equivalent of 30 hours at Federal minimum wage)
- Receiving or has a pending application for unemployment or disability benefits
- Disabled
- Attending school or a training program at least half-time
- Meeting CalWORKs work rules
- In a drug or alcohol abuse treatment program

If the customer does not meet one of the above exemptions, they are a mandatory work registrant and may receive a penalty if they reduce their work hours to less than 30 hours a week without a good reason. When eligibility staff receive a report that a customer has reduced or ended their employment when they worked 30 or more hours a week, they will review to see if the penalty must be implemented. Part of this review will be asking for information about why the change occurred. The penalty will stop them from receiving benefits for one month for the first occurrence, three months for the second occurrence, and six months for the third occurrence.

What is ABAWD?

ABAWD stands for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents. An ABAWD is someone between the ages of 18 and 64. These CalFresh recipients have a 3-month time limit for benefits.

Humboldt County is currently waived from ABAWD requirements

California does not currently have to apply ABAWD rules for CalFresh recipients. Our statewide waiver continues through January 2026. While ABAWD rules are waived for our state, there are still administrative ABAWD processes that are required. This includes informing customers of ABAWD rules with a lengthy script, as well as reviewing for potential exemptions.

We are working to be ready for when ABAWD is implemented in our county, and to allow for best customer service when this change occurs to eligibility requirements for CalFresh benefits. Our staff will be asking more questions and obtaining the information needed for

ABAWD in order to document all potential exemptions because they must meet Federal program requirements, and because it will benefit our community when ABAWD work requirements are required of our CalFresh recipients.

What will happen when ABAWD is implemented?

DHHS Social Services will work with our customers and community to ensure they are informed of the new requirements for CalFresh benefit eligibility. ABAWD households have a 3-month limit to receive benefits unless they meet one of the following exemptions:

- Working and getting paid at least 20 hours per week (average of 80 hours per month)
- Volunteering or performing community service for 20 hours per week (average 80 hours per month)
- Primary care for a child in the home under age 14
- Pregnant
- Receiving or has a pending application for unemployment or disability benefits
- Mentally or physically unfit for employment
- Responsible for the care of a disabled or incapacitated individual
- A Native American Tribe member
- Eligible to Indian Health Services
- Enrolled in workfare through Social Services and completing required hours

Customers who do not meet an exemption are discontinued from CalFresh after they receive three full months of benefits during our statewide 3-year ABAWD Time Clock.

What is the Statewide ABAWD Time Clock?

The state of California uses a statewide clock to set when the 3-year period starts and ends for all CalFresh recipients limited to 3 months of benefits. Our current time clock will end on December 31, 2025. The new time clock for ABAWD will start on January 1, 2026, and end December 31, 2028. The 3-month limit only applies once the waiver is ended by the Federal Government, and for a month in which a customer has no exemption and is not meeting work hour requirements.

Is it possible for benefits to be reinstated?

Benefits can be reinstated if an exemption unknown to our agency is reported. Discontinued customers will potentially have to reapply if enough time has passed since they were aided. Our staff will be reviewing for all potential exemptions and changes any time a timed out customer reapplies.

How can your agency assist?

Let our shared customers know that we are required to inform them about ABAWD rules, but ABAWD rules are not being used to determine eligibility for Humboldt County residents at this time. Let them know this could change in the future, and that Social Services wants to have good information about their circumstances so that we can continue their benefits.

Agencies who utilize volunteers or have other work participation activities, can reach out to our Community Liaison Nelia Green-Goodwin as we build our list of potential work activity resources for the future.