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### **Food assistance work requirements for able-bodied adults being reinstated**

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan is beginning the process of reinstating federal work requirements that able-bodied adults without dependents in 69 counties must meet to continue receiving food assistance – a result of improvements in the state’s unemployment rate.

Able-bodied adults without dependents will be required to meet federal work requirements that have been waived for more than a decade.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services this week is sending letters to more than 67,000 people who may be affected by the change notifying them that the state will begin reinstating the requirements on Oct. 1. Once they reach the date of their next annual case eligibility redetermination, the able-bodied adults will have three months to meet the work requirements or qualify for an exemption before they will lose food assistance benefits. New applicants who are determined eligible for food assistance will be subject to work requirement immediately.

The state previously reinstated requirements in 14 counties – Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Clinton, Eaton, Grand Traverse, Ingham, Ionia, Kalamazoo, Kent, Livingston, Oakland, Ottawa and Washtenaw. Now the requirements will be reinstated in all other counties in Michigan.

Michigan began receiving a waiver from the requirements in 2002 due to high unemployment. With the significant reduction in the state’s jobless rate over the last several years, the federal government notified Michigan that it would no longer be eligible for the waiver in some counties. Since then MDHHS had been phasing in the reinstated requirements.

Able-bodied adults are recipients ages 18 to 49 with no dependents. Unless the recipient has a disability that prevents him or her from working or meets other federal exemption criteria the recipient is subject to work requirements. The able-bodied adult can meet the reinstated work requirements to receive food assistance by:

- Working an average of 20 hours per week each month in unsubsidized employment.
- Participating for an average of 20 hours per week each month in an approved employment and training program.
- Participating in community service by volunteering at a nonprofit organization.

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“MDHHS is prepared to assist affected individuals in meeting these work requirements so that they can achieve self-sufficiency,” said MDHHS Chief Deputy Director Nancy Vreibel. “The good news is that Michigan’s economy is much-improved, and the job market is far better than it was when the state received the federal waiver.”

The federal government determines work requirements and other eligibility criteria for individuals to be eligible to receive food assistance under the U.S. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. MDHHS administers federal food assistance benefits through the state’s Food Assistance Program.

In 20 counties, MDHHS and its partners at Michigan Works! Agencies and the Talent Investment Agency will provide resources – such as approved training programs – to help affected residents meet work requirements. Those counties are: Bay, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Genesee, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Isabella, Jackson, Lenawee, Macomb, Midland, Monroe, Montcalm, Muskegon, Saginaw, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Van Buren and Wayne. Potentially affected food assistance recipients in these counties will be referred by MDHHS to their local Michigan Works! In counties in which Michigan Works Agencies are not able to assist the clients, a community service option is available.

Some federal exemptions to the reinstated work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents will remain. They include exemptions for individuals who are physically or mentally unable to work for 20 hours, are pregnant or care for a child under age 6 or someone who is incapacitated.

Able-bodied adults without dependents can call their MDHHS case specialist with questions or visit [www.michigan.gov/foodassistance](http://www.michigan.gov/foodassistance) for more details on the work requirements, exemptions and other information.

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