

What New Yorkers Need to Know About New Federal Work/Volunteer Requirements

The New York State Office of Mental Health is alerting New Yorkers – including those living with or recovering from behavioral health issues – to new federal work requirements for people who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food benefits. All Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents or ‘ABAWDs’ – defined as anyone between ages 18 and 64 who can work and don’t have any children under age 14 in their household – must now meet certain work requirements to continue receiving SNAP benefits for more than three months over a 3-year period.

Are You Exempt?

There are [exceptions](#) to these rules, **specifically if:**



You participate in substance use treatment.



You are receiving disability benefits from a public or private source, such as Veterans Affairs, Social Security Administration, or New York State disability benefits.



You are in a caregiver role, such as those living with a child under age 14 or taking care of an incapacitated person.



You are age 65 or older.



You are unable to work at least 80 hours a month because of a physical or mental health reason.

If You Are NOT Exempt, How Can You Meet the ABAWD Rules?

- **Participation in job skills training and educational activities for 20 hours a week (80 hours a month)**

This may include college courses, certifications, or credential programs. Courses for aspiring and working mental health peer specialists may be used to meet the participation requirement, provided training hours can be documented. Visit the [New York Certified Peer Specialist Board](#), [the Academy of Peer Services](#), or [Families Together in New York State](#) for information on these programs.

- **Volunteering Counts**

In some instances, volunteering can help you meet these new requirements and may even require less than 80 hours a month. The number of volunteer hours needed per month depends on your monthly SNAP benefit amount and the local minimum wage. For example, someone receiving \$160 per month in SNAP benefits and living upstate where the minimum wage is \$16 would need to do 10 hours of volunteering or a Work Experience Program assignment each month to remain eligible.

- **Paid or Unpaid Work**

The new requirements can be met by working at least 20 hours per week or earning at least \$217.50 per week, even if you are working fewer than 20 hours. Doing in-kind work counts. For instance, someone doing building maintenance for 80 hours per month in exchange for a reduction in rent would meet the monthly work requirement.

Proof of SNAP Eligibility

[Local social service districts](#) can help New Yorkers determine what is needed to prove hours worked or volunteered, how to submit this information, and whether an organization is eligible to support the volunteering requirement.

Volunteer and Work Opportunities

Some OMH facilities offer volunteering opportunities. The agency also works with organizations that offer volunteer opportunities, including [National Alliance on Mental Health-New York City](#) and the [Mental Health Association in New York State](#). The state [Office for the Aging](#) has opportunities for volunteering, and also administers the Senior Community Service Employment Program, a training program for income-eligible New York State residents who are age 55 or over.

NEED HELP?

Connect with your [social services district](#) to determine eligibility for exemptions and find additional resources.