

Work Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service has designated a subset of Basic Food recipients as "able-bodied adults without dependents." They are required to participate in specific, employment-related activities to maintain their assistance. (See [WAC 388-444-0030](#)). People designated as able-bodied adults without dependents:

- Are ages 18-54¹.
- Have no dependent children² living with them.
- Are physically and mentally able to work.
- Have no exemptions from work registration (See [WAC 388-444-0010](#)).

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To receive Basic Food assistance beyond the three-months time limit, people who are not exempt from the requirements or ABAWD time limits (WAC 388-444-0035) must complete one of the following activities:

- Work an average of at least 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month.
- Volunteer monthly in the community through an approved Workfare site. The number of volunteer hours is determined based on the benefit amount.
- Participate in an employment or training program, such as Basic Food Employment and Training, or volunteer in an unpaid work program or another state-approved program for an average of 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month.



Waivers

DSHS requests waivers annually from USDA FNS to exempt identified counties or areas of the state requiring participation. These participation waivers are dependent on unemployment rates in comparison to the national average and approved at the discretion of the USDA secretary.

Under the current waiver, only King County has participation requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents. Remaining counties in Washington state and the Muckleshoot Reservation in King County are currently exempt through Nov. 2, 2025. As of Nov. 3, 2025 no areas are exempt.

For more information, please visit [Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents | DSHS \(wa.gov\)](#).

¹These changes are a result of [H.R.3746 - 118th Congress \(2023 -2024\): Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#). Beginning October 2024, these requirements expanded to ages 18-54. For June-September 2024, the age range was 18-52. As a result of H.R. 1, the age range will change to 18-64.

²H.R. 1 also changes the definition of dependent from a child under 18 to a child under 14 years of age.

More information:

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