



FAQ for Health Care Providers

How Do My Patients Keep Their SNAP (Food) Benefits?



A new federal rule went into effect on January 1, 2016 that limits SNAP benefits to 3 months in a 36 month period for childless adults who are between age 18 and 50. Many of your patients should be exempt from the 3-month SNAP rule if they have a medical condition that *reduces* their ability to work at a regular job. Your patients may also meet other “exemptions” to continue benefits.

Q.1. How disabled do childless adults need to be to keep their SNAP benefits?

Under Massachusetts rules, an adult—age 18 through 49 with no children— is eligible for SNAP for more than 3 months if they have “*a mental or physical illness or disability, temporary or permanent, which reduces their ability to financially support themselves.*”

Some patients have impairments that prevent them from working at all. Other patients can work some hours per week—but not full time or even 20 hours per week. These patients have a *reduced* ability to support themselves. This SNAP standard of illness or disability is a much less strict than the Social Security standard. It is lower than the EAEDC cash benefit disability standard.

Q. 2. What are examples of patients age 18-50 with a reduced ability to work?

- A patient with difficulty maintaining focus and concentration for two hours at a time, or difficulty consistently remembering and carrying out tasks.
- A patient diagnosed with “mild” or “moderate” anxiety, depression, or maladaptive personality that reduces his or her ability to work. The symptoms need not be “marked” or “severe.”
- A patient whose physical condition limits him or her to light or sedentary work including a patient who cannot stand or walk for extended periods of time, or engage in physical labor on a sustained basis.
- A patient who would typically miss 2 or more days of work each month due to a medical condition or treatment for the condition.
- A temporary illness that restricts your patient’s ability to work for a few weeks or longer.

Q. 3. How can I help my patient verify his or her medical condition?

Fill out DTA’s simple one-page *ABAWD Medical Report Form* (ABAWD stands for “able-bodied without dependent”). You do not need to provide a detailed diagnosis or medical documentation.

Q.4 Is there another way for homeless patients to keep their SNAP benefits?

Yes. Many homeless individuals can be exempt from the 3 month SNAP time limit. This includes persons who: lack a stable nighttime place to sleep, have not worked steadily for 6 months in the past 36 months, have been hospitalized recently, or do not have regular access to health care.

You do not need to fill out any DTA Medical Report for these homeless patients. Encourage homeless patients to call the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) ABAWD hotline at 1-888-483-0255 to see if they qualify for a homeless exemption.