

FACT SHEET

Ohio Works First

Ohio Works First was established to provide time-limited cash assistance to eligible families through Ohio's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, which emphasizes employment, personal responsibility and self-sufficiency. Applications are processed at county departments of job and family services, and cash assistance is provided to eligible families for up to 36 months. For child-only cases, there are no time limits for cash assistance.

Each county agency develops its own policies for hardship and good cause extensions. After a 36-month time limit, cash assistance is not available unless the county agency approves an extension. A family may apply for a hardship extension at any time after its 36-month time limit has ended. A family may apply for a good cause extension after a 24-month waiting period following the 36-month time limit.

Who is eligible?

Families with earned income who do not currently participate in Ohio Works First, and who have not participated in at least one of the previous four months, must meet a "gross monthly income test" for eligibility. Gross monthly income includes unearned income and earned income before taxes. The gross monthly income limit for a family of three is currently \$773, but this increases annually. If a family member works and pays for child care, the actual verified cost of child care can be deducted. There is no resource limit for Ohio Works First because resources are not considered in determining eligibility.

Ohio Works First has the following additional requirements:

- Adults and minor heads of household must participate in work activities.
- Minor children in assistance groups and women who are at least six months pregnant may be eligible to receive individual assistance.
- Children must reside with a parent, specified relative, legal guardian or a legal custodian.
- Unmarried minor parents and pregnant minors must be in approved adult-supervised living arrangements or live with a parent, legal guardian, specified relative or legal custodian.
- Adults and minor heads of household who apply for or receive benefits must sign a self-sufficiency contract.

Failure to sign the self-sufficiency contract without good cause can result in denial or termination of benefits which would affect the entire family. The contract explains the requirements for the participant, the requirements for the county department of job and family services and, if applicable, the requirements for the child support enforcement agency and/or public children services agency.

Who is not eligible?

Assistance groups are **not** eligible if they include an individual who:

- does not sign the self-sufficiency contract,
- does not comply with the terms of the contract,
- terminates employment without just cause while receiving transitional Medicaid or child care benefits,
- has income that exceeds the amount for the assistance group size,
- has received benefits fraudulently,
- receives Supplemental Security Income, or
- receives adoption assistance payments or federal, state or local foster care maintenance payments.

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Other individuals who are not eligible include:

- fugitive felons
- probation/parole violators
- individuals convicted for fraudulent misstatement of residence in order to receive benefits.

How much are payments?

Currently, an Ohio Works First payment for a family of three is \$450. Benefits are issued through either the Ohio Eppicard™, which is a pre-paid debit MasterCard, or deposited directly into a checking or savings account. The Eppicard™ can be used at MasterCard member banks, ATMs and any retailers that accept MasterCard.

How can I apply for Ohio Works First?

You may apply for Ohio Works First online by going to <http://ODJFSBenefits.Ohio.gov>, or by filling out the "Request for Cash, Food and Medical Assistance" (JFS 7200) form and submitting it to your county agency. You can get the form at your county agency or at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/interfind.asp?formnum=07200>. You can find the address and phone number of your county agency at <http://jfs.ohio.gov/county/cntydir.stm> or by calling 1-866-635-3748. You may be able to find your local agency in the county government section of your phone book.

You may also file the application through your local Ohio Benefit Bank site. You can find the site nearest you and get more information at <http://governor.ohio.gov/obb>. The Ohio Benefit Bank helps low-and moderate-income Ohioans apply for work supports such as tax credits and public benefits, including Ohio Works First.

Be sure to get the "Your Rights" (JFS 8000) brochure from your county agency or at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/interfind.asp?formnum=08000>. This brochure will give you information about how to apply for many other types of benefits, such as Food Assistance.