



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Food Stamp Work Requirements

What are work requirements?

As part of the bipartisan welfare reform law of 1996, federal law requires that able-bodied childless adults work, train, or volunteer for 20 hours per week in order to receive food stamps. Adults who decide to not meet these requirements are limited to three months of benefits in any three-year period. However, states can waive these requirements and many have over the last few years.

Will implementing work requirements impact children, seniors, or individuals with disabilities?

No, only able-bodied adults with no dependent children over the age of 18 are subject to the work requirement. The requirement does not apply to parents of dependent children, individuals physically or mentally unfit for work, or adults over the age of 50.

How many people could be impacted if states implemented work requirements?

In states that have implemented work requirements, the number of able-bodied adults dependent on food stamps has dropped by 75 percent or more. If all states had implemented work requirements in 2015, as many as 4 million adults – out of 5 million – would have cycled off the program.

Will able-bodied adults be able to meet work requirements, even in areas with high unemployment?

Yes. Able-bodied, childless adults can work, train, or volunteer for at least 20 hours a week in exchange for receiving welfare benefits. Nationally, employers have openings for nearly 6 million jobs, a record high. In states that implemented work requirements, enrollees were twice as likely to be working after the rules went into effect and compliance with work requirements were actually highest in counties with higher levels of unemployment.

Will work requirements save taxpayer money?

Implementing work requirements will reduce spending and increase tax collections. If all states had implemented work requirements in 2015, taxpayers would have saved more than \$8 billion in food stamp spending. While these savings would largely accrue to the federal government, states may experience spillover effects in other, state-funded welfare programs. Additionally, the federal government and states with income taxes are likely to experience increases in revenues as enrollees replace lost food stamps with additional income.



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Will implementing work requirements require the state to increase spending on education or training programs?

No. In fact, some states have actually reduced state spending on education and training programs after implementing work requirements. In states that have restored work requirements, more than 75 percent of enrollees choose to cycle off the program. Many of these former enrollees utilize temp agencies to find immediate employment and then transition into full-time, permanent jobs shortly thereafter. Very few enrollees actually utilize state-funded education or training programs..