Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)
NEW FEDERAL SNAP Work Requirements

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

New federal ABAWD work requirements* may apply to you if you are age 18-64, do not have young children, and are able to work but not working at least 80 hours a month. Please note DHS is extending the start date of this change to March 1 to help ensure customers can prepare for the federal change. Individuals may be exempt if they are

- under age 18 or age 65 or older
- already working (or working, volunteering and/or in work program) at least 80 hours a month
- unable to work due to physical or mental health limitation
- pregnant or have a child under age 14 in the household
- exempt from the general SNAP work requirements (for a reason other than age) *
- Indian, Urban Indian or Californian Indian

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an "ABAWD"?
ABAWD stands for Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents. In SNAP, it refers to adults ages 18–64 who who are not working and do not have an exemption to the work requirements.

What is a "countable month"?
With regard to ABAWDs, a countable month is any month where a customer receives SNAP benefits, are subject to ABAWD rules, and does not meet work requirements. This would mean an ABAWD customer would only receive SNAP benefits for three months unless they later meet the requirements.

Is March 1 the first countable month with the new SNAP ABAWD federal changes?

The first countable month depends on when a customer applied and was approved for benefits. For any new ABAWDs, meaning applications submitted in January 2026, the first countable month is March 1. March may NOT be your first countable month if you received SNAP benefits in the past, were an ABAWD at the time you received the SNAP benefits and already used one or more countable months.

What if I was an ABAWD before?
If you were an ABAWD prior to 2026, you may already have countable months, and your benefits may be impacted sooner than March 1.

Updated January 7, 2026

When could my SNAP benefits stop?

Every customer has a unique case, and "countable months" are based on the months already used. Anyone who is scheduled to roll off of SNAP due to the time limit, based on ABAWD rules, will receive a notice from DHS in the mail. Customers may continue to receive SNAP if their circumstances change and you have an exemption that you didn't have at the time of application.

I received a notice saying March is my first countable month. Is that correct?

Please refer to any DHS notices for your specific case. You may have received a notice referencing a February date, which was moved to March for new ABAWDs. You may have had previous countable months that were not reflected in the auto generated notice. Any population impacted by the implementation of the March 1 date will receive an additional notice/s, so it is important for customers not to throw away any notice from DHS. If you are unsure if you are impacted or would like an update on your status, you can check the status of your case on the customer portal (healthyrhode.ri.gov) or by using the self-service call center line at 1-855-MY-RIDHS (1-855-697-4347).

What should I do if I am unsure how many months I have left?

If you are an ABAWD and are not sure how many months you have left, you can contact DHS or speak with a caseworker or community partner. Please ask specifically: "Have I used any ABAWD countable months before March?"

Can I avoid losing my benefits?

Yes, you can take steps to avoid losing SNAP benefits. The most efficient way to not lose benefits, if you are an ABAWD, is by working, volunteering, or participating in an approved program at least 80 hours per month. Alternatively, you can see if you qualify for an exemption. Please go to the top of this document to reference possible exemptions.

Am I part of the group subject to the new SNAP ABAWD federal changes? Am I losing benefits in March?

You may be part of the newly impacted group if you are age 18-64, do not have young children, and are able to work but not working at least 80 hours a month. You may also be impacted if you had an exemption due to homelessness, veteran status, or foster care status at age 18. These exemptions are no longer valid as of March 1. Please refer to your specific case as March may be your second or third countable month. Please note if March is your final month, benefit loss is effective April 1 if an exemption or other work requirements are not established with DHS.

I am not understanding the change from February to March?

For new ABAWDs, their first countable month is March. This may not be the first countable month for someone who was previously an ABAWD. For example, a previous ABAWD may have February be their final countable month, and benefits loss would occur March 1 in very specific instances. This is why it is important to know how many countable months you may or may not have as every case is different.

###