



State of New Jersey

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Assistant Commissioner

The following Decision is distributed for your information. This Decision has been made in consideration of the specific facts of this case. This Decision is not to be interpreted as establishing any new mandatory policy or procedure otherwise officially promulgated.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FINAL DECISION

OAL DKT. NO. HPW **10616-26 H.D.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C020954010 (HUNTERDON COUNTY BD. OF SOC. SVCS.)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's termination of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP") benefits, as well as the denial of Work First New Jersey/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families ("WFNJ/TANF") benefits. The Agency terminated Petitioner's SNAP benefits contending that she failed to participate in the required work activity. The Agency denied Petitioner's application for WFNJ/TANF benefits because she had exhausted the 60-month lifetime limit for WFNJ benefits and did not qualify for any further extension of benefits at the present time. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On August 4, 2026, the Honorable Sarah G. Crowley, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On August 18, 2026, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determinations.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development ("DFD"), Department of Human Services, I have reviewed the ALJ's Initial Decision and the record, and I hereby MODIFY the ALJ's Initial Decision, and MODIFY the Agency's determinations, based on the discussion below.

In order to maintain eligibility for SNAP benefits, able-bodied adults without dependents ("ABAWDS"), unless exempt, are required to participate in a work activity. See N.J.A.C. 10:87-10.20(a). Such regulations were impacted by federal law governing SNAP and ABAWD rules, including H.R. 1 Public Law 119-21 (July 4, 2025), the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 ("FRA"), P.L. 118-5, 7 U.S.C. 2015, and 7 C.F.R. 271.2, 273.7, 273.74, and the termination of New Jersey's federally approved waiver of the ABAWD rules by the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. See DFD Instruction ("DFDI") No. 25-11-02 (in effect at the time of the termination in this matter), and supplemented by DFDI No. 26-06-04 (in effect at the time of the issuance of this Final Agency Decision).

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.3(a), "eligibility for cash assistance benefits shall be limited to a lifetime total of 60 cumulative months for an adult individual recipient." See also N.J.A.C. 10:90-1.1(d) ("Assistance benefits provided under WFNJ are time-limited and considered a temporary cash subsidy[.]"). However, an individual may receive additional months of cash assistance if he/she qualifies for an exemption from, or extension of, the time limit, as set forth at N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.4 and -2.5 respectively. The goal of WFNJ is help the recipient achieve self-sufficiency through obtaining employment and removal from the program. See N.J.S.A. 44:10-62(a).

Based upon an independent review of the record, on April 6, 2026, the Agency notified Petitioner that she was subject to the ABAWD Time Limit Rules, whereby she could only receive SNAP benefits for three (3) months during a 3-year period



unless she was working or in an allowable activity for at least eighty (80) hours per month. See Exhibit R-1. The Agency therefore referred Petitioner to Employment & Training Services ("ETS") for ABAWD compliance during May, 2026. Ibid. Petitioner provided the Agency with no exemptions which would exempt her from the federal ABAWD requirements, and, on June 30, 2026, the Agency notified Petitioner that she was non-compliant with ABAWD provisions effective June 1, 2026, and her case was closed due to her failure to comply with the ABAWD provisions. Ibid.; see also N.J.A.C. 10:87-10.20(a).

At the time of the hearing, Petitioner did not dispute that she had not complied with the ABAWD work requirements. See Initial Decision at 2-3. Accordingly, the ALJ found that the Agency's closure of Petitioner's SNAP case was proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 3-4. I agree.

Separately, on April 29, 2026, Petitioner applied for WFNJ/TANF benefits. See Exhibit R-1. On June 2, 2026, the Agency denied the application for WFNJ/TANF benefits, asserting that she did not have an eligible child in her household, as her son was 17 years of age and not enrolled in high school. Ibid.; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.7(a). However, at the time of the hearing, rather than testimony being provided as to the basis for the June 2, 2026 denial of WFNJ benefits, the Agency instead argued that Petitioner had exceeded the 60-month lifetime limit for receipt of WFNJ benefits. See Initial Decision at 2; N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.3(a). At the hearing, Petitioner did not dispute that she received more than 60-months of WFNJ/TANF benefits. Ibid. I note that the transmitted record in this matter contains a notification dated August 4, 2026, the same date as the hearing in this matter, indicating that Petitioner was found ineligible to receive WFNJ benefits effective June 2, 2026, due to having received 72 months of WFNJ benefits. Supporting documentation for this position are also included.

Based upon an independent review of the record, I find that the Agency appropriately denied WFNJ/TANF benefits to Petitioner, as there was no evidence presented that Petitioner would qualify for an exemption from, or extension of, the lifetime limit of benefits. N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.4, -2.5. The Agency's adverse action in this matter is modified to reflect this as the appropriate reason and legal basis for the denial. Further, the Initial Decision in this matter is also modified to reflect these findings, as the ALJ analyzed the case under a lifetime exhaustion of Emergency Assistance ("EA") benefits, rather than WFNJ benefits, which requires a different regulatory reliance and analysis. See Initial Decision at 3-4.

Accordingly, the Initial Decision is hereby MODIFIED the ALJ's Initial Decision, and the Agency's determinations are MODIFIED, as outlined above.

Officially approved final version. September 17, 2026

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

