



State of New Jersey

MIKIE SHERRILL
Governor

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PO BOX 716

TRENTON, NJ 08625-0716

STEPHEN CHA, MD, MHSR
Commissioner

DR. DALE G. CALDWELL
Lt. Governor

NATASHA JOHNSON
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 **10410-26 S.A.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C096680008 (GLOUCESTER COUNTY DIV. OF SOC. SVCS.)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's termination of Work First New Jersey/General Assistance ("WFNJ/GA"), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP"), benefits. The Agency terminated Petitioner's WFNJ/GA benefits because Petitioner failed to take necessary steps to lift a sanction. The Agency terminated Petitioner's SNAP benefits contending that she failed to participate in the required work activity. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On August 7, 2026, the Honorable Tama B. Hughes, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a telephonic plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On August 19, 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 ADOPT the ALJ's Initial Decision, and AFFIRM the Agency's determinations, based on the discussion below.

In order to maintain eligibility for receipt of WFNJ benefits, a recipient must cooperate with, and participate in, the WFNJ work activity requirements. See N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.1(a). If a WFNJ recipient fails to comply with their work activities without good cause, the recipient is subject to a sanction resulting in a pro-rata reduction of WFNJ benefits for the first month. See N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.13(b). Thereafter, if the WFNJ benefits recipient is still non-compliant, without good cause, the WFNJ benefits will be suspended for one month. See N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.13(b)(1). If the non-compliance continues, the recipient's case will close the month after the suspension of WFNJ benefits. See N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.13(b)(2).

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).

Here, the record reveals that Petitioner failed to participate in the work activity required by regulation to maintain receipt of WFNJ/GA benefits. See Initial Decision at 2-5; see also Exhibit R-1 and N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.1(a), -4.13. The Agency notified Petitioner on February 19, 2026, that he was scheduled for an appointment related to his work activity on March



2, 2026, which he failed to attend. Ibid. Petitioner provided no explanation to the Agency as to why he failed to attend the scheduled meeting and he did not attempt to reschedule such meeting. Ibid. On March 20, 2026, the Agency sent Petitioner a letter indicating a sanction would be imposed upon his WFNJ/GA case, effective April 1, 2026, for failure to comply with WFNJ program work requirements. Ibid.; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.13.

At the time of the hearing, Petitioner testified that he failed to attend the work activity as he used the transportation money provided by the Agency on interview clothes and therefore had no money to pay for transportation to the appointment. See Initial Decision at 3.

Without good cause, as defined at N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.11, a WFNJ/GA recipient must comply with the required work activity in order to receive benefits, and the Agency must impose a sanction upon Petitioner for failure to participate in the required work activity and suspend WFNJ/GA benefits. See Initial Decision at 4; see also Exhibit R-1. Accordingly, the ALJ concluded that the Agency's determination to terminate Petitioner's WFNJ/GA benefits, for failure to come into compliance in order to lift the sanction, was proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 4-5; see also Exhibit R-1, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.13. I agree.

As to the SNAP benefits, on December 9, 2025, Petitioner was approved for SNAP benefits, at which time the Agency notified Petitioner that he was subject to the ABAWD Time Limit Rules, whereby he could only receive SNAP benefits for three (3) months during a 3-year period unless he was working or in an allowable activity for at least eighty (80) hours per month. See Initial Decision at 2-3; see also Exhibits R-1, R-2. The Agency therefore referred Petitioner to a program for ABAWD compliance during January, 2026. Ibid. Petitioner failed to report to the ABAWD work activity on January 5, 2026. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-1. During January, 2026, and February, 2026, Petitioner was temporarily deferred from the ABAWD work activity due to his pending WFNJ/GA application interview, which took place on February 18, 2026. See Initial Decision at 3. On February 19, 2026, the Agency informed Petitioner of his WFNJ/GA work activity, which he failed to attend. Ibid.; see also Exhibit R-1. The work activity would have provided the required hours for both SNAP and WFNJ/GA benefits, had Petitioner attended. See Initial Decision at 3. Petitioner provided the Agency with no exemptions which would exempt him from the federal ABAWD requirements, and, on May 20, 2026, the Agency notified Petitioner that he was non-compliant with ABAWD provisions and that, effective June 1, 2026, his SNAP case would be closed due to his failure to comply with the ABAWD provisions. Ibid.; see also Exhibits R-2, R-3, and N.J.A.C. 10:87-10.20(a). Based on the foregoing, the ALJ found that the Agency's closure of Petitioner's SNAP case was also proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 3-5. I also agree.

Accordingly, the Initial Decision is hereby ADOPTED, and the Agency's determination is AFFIRMED, as outlined above.

Officially approved final version. September 17, 2026

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

