



## Ohio Works First

### What is Ohio Works First?

Ohio Works First is the financial assistance portion of the state's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, which provides cash benefits to needy families for up to 36 months.

### Who is eligible?

Families with children that meet a "gross monthly income test" may be eligible. Gross monthly income includes unearned income – for example, Social Security benefits – and earned income – such as payment for work – before taxes. Since July 1, 2014, the gross monthly income limit for a family of three has been \$825. This typically increases annually. If a family member works and pays for child care, the cost of child care may be deducted. Resources such as a car or home ownership are not considered in determining eligibility.

In addition:

- Minor children living with guardians other than their parents may be eligible for "child-only" assistance, with no time limit.
- Women who are at least six months pregnant may be eligible for individual assistance.
- Unmarried minor parents and pregnant minors must be in approved, adult-supervised living arrangements or live with a parent, legal guardian, relative or legal custodian.
- Most adults and minor heads of household must participate in work activities. Allowable work activities include such things as on-the-job training, community service and education directly related to employment.
- In order to receive benefits, adults and minor heads of household 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 participant's rights and responsibilities and what the county department of job and family services will do to help the participant become self-sufficient.

### 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
- Has income that exceeds the amount for the assistance group size
- Has received benefits fraudulently

Other individuals who are not eligible include:

- Fugitive felons
- Probation/parole violators
- Individuals convicted for fraudulently misstating where they live in order to receive benefits.

### How much are payments?

In 2015, an Ohio Works First payment for a family of three is \$473. Benefits are issued through either the Ohio Pathway card, which is a pre-paid debit MasterCard, or deposited directly into a checking or savings account. The Ohio Pathway card 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/County\\_Directory.pdf](http://jfs.ohio.gov/County/County_Directory.pdf) 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 also may file the application through your local Ohio Benefit Bank site. You can find the site nearest you and get more information at <http://ohiobenefits.org>. The Ohio Benefit Bank helps low-and moderate-income Ohioans apply for public benefits such as 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. You can also ask for the "Program Enrollment and Benefit Information" JFS 07501 brochure, which provides additional information.