**FoodShare Work Registration Requirements**

**Income Maintenance Agencies Call Script**

**October 3, 2016**

**Timeline**

Effective September 24, 2016, income maintenance (IM) agencies can begin using this script to answer questions from FoodShare applicants and members about the work registration requirements.

**Note:** This call script is to answer questions from applicants and members about the work registration requirements. **This script is separate from the FoodShare interview script** that lists the federally required information that must be shared verbally with applicants and members about the work registration requirements.

**Background**

Process and system changes related to the work registration requirements are being implemented to more accurately support policy requirements. As a result of these changes, the Department of Health Services (DHS) will be better able to serve and track work registrants in accordance with federal reporting requirements. The work registration requirements are not new.

Effective September 24, 2016, FoodShare applicants and members will be subject to a more detailed application and interview process to determine their work registration status. The process will automate sanctions for failure to meet the FoodShare work registration requirements.

Work registration status will be applied to the following:

* FoodShare applications with a filing date on or after September 24, 2016.
* FoodShare renewals with an eligibility run date on or after September 24, 2016.
* Cases that have a Loss of Employment page created on or after September 24, 2016.

FoodShare members ages 16 through 59 must comply with the work registration requirements as a condition of FoodShare eligibility, unless they meet an exemption. Members who do not comply with the work registration requirements are sanctioned from receiving FoodShare benefits. The work registration requirements are different from the work requirement for certain able-bodied adults ages 18 through 49 that was implemented statewide on April 1, 2015.

If a member is sanctioned for failing to meet the FoodShare work registration requirements, the member will be sent a sanction letter indicating why he or she received a sanction, the length of the sanction period, how he or she can resolve the sanction, and that he or she must reapply for FoodShare benefits once the sanction is done. CARES automatically sends the sanction letter when the member receives a sanction.

**Script**

1. **What are the work registration requirements?**

* All FoodShare applicants and members ages 16 through 59 must be registered for work unless they are considered exempt.
* You will be registered for work at the time you are determined eligible for FoodShare unless you meet an exemption.
* If you need to comply with the work registration requirements,
  + You must register for work when you apply for FoodShare and every 12 months after that.
  + You must provide us with your employment status or ability to work.
  + You must not voluntarily and without good cause quit a job of 30 or more hours per week (or a job with earnings equal to 30 or more hours per week at the federal minimum wage).
  + You must not reduce your work hours to less than 30 per week (or your weekly earnings to less than 30 times the federal minimum wage).
  + You must accept a suitable job offer, if you are offered a job.
  + You must meet the unemployment compensation program work requirements if you applied for or are getting unemployment benefits.
  + You must meet the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program work requirements if you are taking part in W-2.

1. **What are the exemptions from the work registration requirements?**

* You are exempt from the work registration requirements if :
  + - * You are 16 or 17 years old and are not the primary person in the FoodShare group.
      * You are 16 or 17 years old and are the primary person in the FoodShare group but are enrolled in school or in an employment and training program at least half-time.
      * You are found to be unfit for work. This applies :
        + If you get temporary or permanent disability benefits from the government or a private source.
        + If you are found to be mentally or physically unable to work by your agency.
        + If you are verified as unable to work by a statement from a health care professional or social worker.
      * You are enrolled in Wisconsin Works (W-2) and complying with the W-2 work requirement.
      * You are the primary caregiver for a dependent child under age 6 (whether the child lives in your home or out of your home). However, if you and another person have parental control of the child, only one of you can be exempt from work registration as the primary caregiver of that child.
      * You are the primary caregiver for another person who cannot care for himself or herself (whether the person lives in your home or out of your home).
      * You have applied for or are receiving unemployment compensation.
      * You are regularly taking part in an alcohol or other drug abuse treatment or rehabilitation program.
      * You are working 30 or more hours per week or earning wages equal to 30 or more hours per week at the federal minimum wage.
      * You are enrolled at least half-time in a recognized school, training program, or institution of higher education.
      * You are receiving transitional FoodShare benefits.
    - You may need to provide proof if you meet one of these exemptions.

1. **What is a sanction?**

* A sanction is a period of time when you cannot get FoodShare benefits.
* If you are not exempt from the work registration requirements, you will be sanctioned from getting FoodShare benefits for a period of time if you voluntarily and without good cause:
  + Turn down a suitable job offer.
    - Quit a job of 30 or more hours per week (or a job with earnings equal to 30 or more hours per week at the federal minimum wage).
    - Reduce your work hours to less than 30 hours per week (or his or her earnings to less than 30 times the federal minimum wage)
    - Take part in W-2 but do not meet the W-2 program work requirements.
    - Apply for or are getting unemployment benefits but you do not meet the unemployment compensation program work requirements.
  + If you become exempt, you must report the exemption in order to remove the work registration requirements.
  + If you lose your exemption for working, unemployment, or W-2 without good cause, you will be sanctioned if you don’t have any other exemptions.

1. **How long is a sanction?**

* The first sanction is one month long.
* A second sanction is three months long.
* A third or subsequent sanction is six months long.

1. **How do I get out of a sanction?**

A sanction will end when you become exempt from the work registration requirements, or the sanction period ends.

1. **Once my sanction is done, how do I get FoodShare again?**

* You will need to reapply.
* If you are part of a FoodShare group, you will need to let your worker know to update your case instead of having you reapply.

1. **What does good cause mean?**

* Good cause means there is a situation beyond your control that prevents you from meeting the work registration requirements.
* If you do not have good cause, it may result in a sanction.
* If you have good cause, you will not get a sanction.
* Your worker will consider your situation to determine if there was good cause.
* Some examples of reasons for good cause are:
* You did not accept a job offer, or you quit a job, because the job was not suitable.
* You were fired or quit at the employer’s demand.
* You were discriminated against by an employer based on your age, race, sex, color, handicap, religious beliefs, national origin, or political beliefs.
* You left your job for another job, training, or school.
* You were not able to continue a job because you changed where you live.
* Your personal health problems, or the health problems of others, did not allow you to continue your job.
* Your job hours were reduced by your employer without your permission.
* You quit a job to join a volunteer program such as AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps VISTA.
* You did not have transportation to get to the job.
* There were other situations beyond your control that the agency feels was good cause.