

**Missouri Employment and Training Program
(METP)**

Practices and Procedures Manual

**Missouri Department of Economic Development
Division of Workforce Development**

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Food Stamps Benefits

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is designed to promote the general welfare and safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's population by raising the levels of nutrition among low-income households. In Missouri, the program is called the Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program is overseen by Missouri Family Support Division (FSD).

Each participating household receives an allotment of Food Stamp benefits based on the USDA's "Thrifty Food Plan". Missouri's Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) is the method by which households receive and use Food Stamp benefits. Households may use their Missouri EBT card in any grocery store or retail location anywhere in the United States that has been authorized by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Food Stamp recipients can find out more information on mydss.mo.gov or by calling 855-FSD-INFO.

Missouri Employment and Training Program (METP)

The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 states that an Employment and Training (E&T) Program, under SNAP, must be implemented in each State with the intention of helping participants achieve self-sufficiency.

In January 2016, Missouri Family Support Division (FSD) contracted with Division of Workforce Development (DWD) to operate Missouri's E&T Program, called the Missouri Employment and Training Program (METP). METP is designed to provide employment and training services to Mandatory Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) and Voluntary Food Stamp recipients.

Current Changes to Food Stamp Program / Time limits for ABAWDs

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 set time limits for ABAWDs to receive Food Stamp benefits. Prior to January 1, 2016, the Family Support Division had a waiver and ABAWDs did not have to complete work and/or training to continue to receive benefits. Effective January 1, 2016, the waiver expired and time-limits and work/training requirements were reinstated for ABAWDs to receive Food Stamp benefits.

ABAWD eligibility for Food Stamp benefits is limited to any 3 months in a 36-month period unless the individual meets the ABAWD work/training requirements.

Any month when a Mandatory ABAWD participant is receiving a full month of Food Stamp benefits and is not complying with the monthly work/training requirement, the participant is using what is called a non-work month. A Mandatory ABAWD can only receive three non-work/training months in a three year (36 months) period.

If an ABAWD lost benefits due to non-participation for 3 non-work months, they can regain eligibility by completing 80 hrs in a 30 day period. After an ABAWD has regained eligibility, they can receive benefits for an additional 3 non-work months and then can only receive benefits on a month to month basis.

Mandatory ABAWD – Employment and Training (E&T) Requirements

A mandatory ABAWD is defined as a Food Stamp recipient, age 18-49 that has no child under the age of 18 in the household, is not disabled or pregnant, and does not meet exemption criteria. ABAWDs are required to meet an 80 hour work/training requirement, per calendar month.

In order to continue to receive monthly Food Stamp Benefits, a mandatory participant is required to work, and/or participate in approved employment and training activities for 80 or more hours per calendar month. Employment and training activities include WIOA activities and services provided at Missouri Job Centers.

The purpose of the Missouri Employment and Training Program is to provide Food Stamp recipients the opportunities to gain skills, training and/or work experience that will improve their ability to attain employment, decrease their dependency on public assistance programs, and maintain self-sufficiency.

Participation in METP is voluntary; this means a Mandatory ABAWD can make a choice not to enroll into METP. Staff may encounter ABAWDs who choose not to participate in METP. When this occurs, make a case note indicating the ABAWD was informed about METP but chose not to enroll at this time.

ABAWD Exemptions

Under certain circumstances FSD may remove an ABAWD from the employment and training requirement, temporarily or permanently, with an exemption(s). If an ABAWD meets an exemption, he or she is not required to participate in an employment and training component and may still be eligible to receive their Food Stamp benefits.

ABAWD Exemptions are only determined by FSD. Exemptions may include one or more of the following:

- Receiving unemployment (in any state)
- Required in the home to care for an ill or incapacitated person
- Unable to work due to an illness, injury, or disability
- Attending drug addict/alcohol treatment program
- A full-time student

If an ABAWD states they meet an exemption, report this to FSD on the FS-5. The ABAWD can report this to FSD at any time by going to a FSD Resource Center found at mydss.mo.gov or calling 855-FSD-INFO.

Voluntary Food Stamp Participant

Voluntary Food Stamp participants between the ages of 16-60, are not required to participate in a employment and training component, however, they may volunteer to participate in job search, work, and/or training. Voluntary Food Stamp recipients are not required to meet the 80 hour training/work requirement that is mandated for ABAWDs. Voluntary Food Stamp participants may enroll or withdrawal from participation at anytime.

For volunteers, it is not mandatory to transmit documentation of participation hours to FSD, unless the participant obtained employment. Employment documentation must be sent to FSD on the FS-5 form.

FSD may change a voluntary participant's status to mandatory. Once FSD changes a voluntary participant status to mandatory, the participant will be required to follow ABAWD Employment & Training requirements.

FSD's Referral Process For METP

FSD will perform an initial screening to identify Mandatory ABAWDs and Voluntary Food Stamp Participants. FSD transmits Mandatory ABAWD and voluntary referrals to DWD through an electronic data exchange. The mandatory status will be downloaded to Toolbox and appear as "METP ABAWD" possible in Toolbox. Review the Toolbox "METP Desk Aid" (<https://jobs.mo.gov/dwdtechsupport>) for instructions on enrollment.

If a Mandatory ABAWD participant reports to the Job Center, and the TB possible enrollment status does not show "METP ABAWD" it may be because; 1) the FSD load did not have time to populate by the overnight process because the participant may have reported directly from a County Office to the local Job Center the same day; or 2) FSD changed participants status from mandatory to voluntary. Staff should enroll the participant in to METP Voluntary to begin providing services. Then on subsequent visits to the Job Center if the Mandatory ABAWD enrollment is available close the voluntary enrollment and enroll the participant into Mandatory ABAWD.

Voluntary Food Stamp participants are not automatically loaded in Toolbox. FSD advises Voluntary Food Stamp participants of the services available at the Missouri Job Centers. The participant may report to their local Job Center and request enrollment.

METP Date of Birth Verification

Some METP participants may report to enroll in METP and not have the documentation required to be enrolled in WIOA Adult.

If a METP participant does not have the required documents to verify "date of birth" staff is allowed to use the FSD Load screen to verify "Date of Birth" for enrollment. The FSD Load Information tab displays the date of birth received from the Family Support Division. Because USDOL allows the use of public assistance records to document date of birth, it is allowable to use the DOB in the FSD Load tab for registration through the Membership screens.

To verify "Date of Birth" staff will need to access the FSD load screen through TB "Seeker History" icon (blue books). The "FSD Load Information" is in the 5th tab under seeker history. After verifying date of birth, document "DOB verified from FSD Load" in the description box when completing the registration.

Client Status Change/ Closures

If the individual's status changes from active to inactive during participation in an employment and training component, Job Center staff will allow the recipient to complete the component in which they are currently enrolled. The recipient will not be enrolled in any subsequent METP component.

If status changes from voluntary to mandatory – close the voluntary enrollment with "Transition to METP ABAWD" and proceed with a Mandatory METP ABAWD enrollment.

METP Voluntary Closure:

Job Center staff can only close enrollments for METP Voluntary participants. Enrollments should only be closed if the participant is sure they do not want to receive any additional Job Center Services and they are not currently enrolled in METP funded Training.

If METP Volunteer is enrolled in METP funded training, enrollment will close after 1st natural break in training session. If training is short term (i.e. computer classes, truck driving, etc) enrollment will close at end of training session.

Voluntary Closures include:

- The participant indicates they no longer want to participate. Close the voluntary enrollment with closure reason: "Inactive, no longer participating".
- The participant entered full time employment. Close the voluntary enrollment with the closure reason: "Entered full time employment".

METP ABAWD Closure:

Only FSD can close METP ABAWD enrollments. The enrollment outcome will say: "System Closed FSD inactive". Participant will not be enrolled in any additional METP components. They can continue with WIOA Job Center services.

METP Activities/Allowable Components

Components should encourage self-sufficiency and be based on the participants Employment Plan. METP participants can use the following activities/services to count towards their 80 hours per calendar month work requirement:

- DESE Approved: ELA Classes / Adult Basic Education (ABE), HiSet
- Job Center Staff Assisted Services
- Employment (as authorized by FSD)
- Post-Secondary Training and Education
- Job Center workshops
- Self-Directed Job Search

The exception to these services are: WIOA follow-up, membership, employment plan service to entering TRE, WRE, employment plan supportive services and follow-up.

Self-directed job search are activities the participants completes outside the Job Center and are recorded on the Job Search Log. Self directed job searches cannot account for more 40 hours towards the mandatory 80 hour work/training requirement, per calendar month.

METP Education/Training Policy

METP funds may be used to pay tuition and any other required educational expenses allowable through the METP Supportive Service Policy.

METP-funded training must not exceed a total of \$10,000 per year, per individual.

In cases where a METP program participant is determined to be in need of Training services, staff must create a WIOA Adult Program Actual Enrollment in the case management system by completing the Eligibility, Enrollment and Employment Plan sections of the system.

Education/Training services may be made available to employed and unemployed participants. METP participants may be enrolled in training when Job Center staff determines, after an interview, evaluation/assessment, and career planning, that the participant is:

- Unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to, or higher than wages from, previous employment through career services; and
- In need of training services to obtain or retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to, or higher than, wages from previous employment; and
- Have the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in training services; and
- Have selected a program of training services that is directly linked to the employment opportunities in the local area or the planning region, or in another area to which the individuals are willing to commute or relocate; and
- Are unable to obtain financial assistance from other sources to pay the costs of such training, including State-funded programs, Trade Adjustment Assistance grant funds, and Federal Pell Grants established under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, or require METP assistance in addition to other sources of grant assistance, including Federal Pell Grants.

All of these requirements for training services must be met and documented in the case management system. Job Center staff shall complete the Appropriateness tab in the Employment Plan by providing a full and complete explanation in the text field.

The case file must contain a determination of need for training services as determined through the interview, evaluation, or assessment, and career planning supported by local labor market information and training- provider performance information; or through any other career service received. Explanations must include a clear description of the information, such as State or Federal labor market information to prove the training chosen by the participant is linked to an employment opportunity.

The case file must also contain a printout from the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) showing that the program of study was approved on the date the training eligibility determination was made. If a program isn't ETPS approved, staff should work with the school in getting the application submitted and approved.

METP Supportive Services

Supportive Services are defined as those services necessary to enable an individual to participate in activities authorized under METP. This Policy provides guidelines for administering Supportive Services. Supportive Services should be made available to assist customers in removing or reducing barriers to participate in METP activities.

Supportive Services may include transportation related expenses and work related expenses. The extent of Supportive Services provided will vary based on the customer's needs and available resources.

Supportive Services are only to be provided to customers who:

- Are participating in employment, education, or training components; and
- Are unable to obtain Supportive Services themselves or via their support network; and
- Are unable to obtain Supportive Services through other programs including community agencies that provide these services; and
- Demonstrate a need for assistance to enable participation in METP components.

Supportive Service payments are requested individually for specific needs. Supportive Service payments are made on a case-by-case basis only when determined necessary and reasonable. A statement that a customer "needs" a Supportive Service will not justify the payment of these expenses. (i.e., "Customer states he needs tools for work." The payment cannot be authorized on this statement alone; but instead, must be related to the METP component; based on customer need; and other resources must be sought first.). The Job Center staff determination of financial need must be documented through case management Service Notes. Because the payment process includes a review of these notes, it is imperative that they are clear, concise, and complete. Failure to properly document the service note in the case management system may result in delayed payment or non-reimbursement.

Service notes regarding Supportive Service payments must include at a minimum all of the following:

- The type of Supportive Service paid (e.g., TRE, WRE, Education/Training);
- The amount of Supportive Service paid;
- The timeframe for which the Supportive Service was paid;
- The justification of need for the Supportive Service; and
- Lack of other community resources.

In all cases, staff must review Service Notes prior to making any Supportive Service payments to avoid duplicate payments and ensure payments remain reasonable and necessary.

Transportation Related Expenses (TRE)

METP participants engaged in an allowable employment, education, or training component may receive mileage reimbursement. It will be calculated based on the round trip mileage from the participant's home directly to the training/work facility and back using a web-based mapping service such as Google Maps, MapQuest, Yahoo Maps, or a similar service. Verification documents must be obtained prior to payment.

Participants enrolled in an educational program or training must submit the completed Weekly Claim for Transportation Related Expenses form (DWD-PO-605). Participants in METP who are engaged with the METP and employment, must provide documentation to verify the days worked, such as a payroll records or other document from the employer showing the days worked. There must be a minimum of 10 miles for each TRE entry into toolbox. The mileage reimbursement rate is \$0.37 per mile and will only be paid via EBT card. METP funds will not be used to pay transportation expenses associated with “self-directed” job search activities.

Work Related Expenses (WRE)

METP participants engaged in an allowable employment, education, or training component may receive WRE if the expense meets all of the general Supportive Service eligibility criteria listed above and required in order to complete the necessary functions to perform a job or training. Example of exclusion would be dress clothes or dress shoes for an office job.

Every Local Workforce Development Area should follow their Local Supportive Service Policy as approved by DWD with the exceptions listed below:

METP funds cannot be used to pay the following expenses:

- Automobile Purchase
- Automobile Tags, Title, or License
- Automobile Insurance
- Drug or Alcohol Counseling or Therapy

FS-5 Form

The FS-5 is used to report; WIOA services, volunteer work, in-kind work, work or training that begin or ended in the past 30 days, changes in ABAWD status or exemptions. The METP participant should complete the form with as much information as they can. Job Center staff should ensure the participant’s current phone number and address are on the FS-5. Send any documentation the participant may have verifying their employment or training.

METP Job Search Log

The METP Job Search Log is used by the METP participant to record employer contacts during their independent, self-directed job search component.

The Job Search Log is a three-page document. The first page is the Job Search Log Contract. This contract is reviewed with the participant and then signed by participant and Job Center staff. The signed contract is then scanned to FSD for retention and is only sent one time for each participant per enrollment. The next two pages are used by the participant to document the employer contacts they have made during the month.

The METP job search log is to be transmitted to FSD within 2 working days of receipt by Job Center staff. Failure to send the job search log in a timely manner may impact participant’s benefits. This error could result in FSD coding participant in non-compliance causing participant to lose benefits until error is corrected.

The normal job search period will begin with the day of the month in which participant is enrolling and end with the last day of the month. Example: Participant enrolls on March 04, 2016 - job search log is dated March 04-31, 2016.

The Job Search Log should be returned by the 4th day of the following month. Participant may return job search log sooner if completed. If participant returns job search log later than the scheduled return date, staff is to accept the log and transmit it to FSD regardless of when it was returned.

When participant returns the job search log, Job Center staff will review to determine if the job search log is completed properly. If participant needs to correct job search log, or enter missing information, provide participant use of calendars, phone directories (including web directories) to look up employer's address and phone number to complete job search log.

Questions?

Questions on eligibility, ABAWD status and exemptions should be directed to FSD at any time by going to a FSD Resource Center found at mydss.mo.gov or by calling 855-FSD-INFO.