



## Exemptions for ABAWDS

This memorandum announces the Fiscal Year 1999 allocations to States of exemptions for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs). The law allows State agencies to exempt a percentage of their caseload of unemployed persons without dependents from the prohibition against receiving food stamps for more than 3 months in any 3-year period. The memorandum was sent to Food and Nutrition Service regional offices on 9/18/98 for forwarding to the States in their regions.

### There are four attached tables:

- Total exemptions per State,
- Exemptions (no time limit),
- Exemptions (6-month time limit),
- Exemptions (3-month time limit).

**September 18, 1998**

**Subject:** Fiscal Year 1999 Allocations of the 15 Percent Exemptions for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents

**To:** All Regional Directors / Food Stamp Program

Attached are the fiscal year (FY) 1999 allocations of the 15 percent exemptions for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDS). Section 6(o) of the Food Stamp Act authorizes FNS to adjust the number of 15 percent exemptions allocated to each State at the beginning of the fiscal year to reflect changes in the States' caseloads and our estimate of changes in the proportion of food stamp recipients covered by waivers. The attached allocations reflect these adjustments.

There are four attachments. The first attachment lists the number of exemptions on a State-by-State basis. The remaining three attachments are examples of the allowable per case-month exemptions by State if no time limit is placed on the exemptions, if a three month time limit is placed on the exemptions, and if a six month time limit is placed on the exemptions.

Last fiscal year, State agencies demonstrated uniqueness and flexibility in determining how to use this exemption authority. For example, State agencies exempted individuals who were under the age of 21 or over the age of 45, who were homeless, who were residing in shelters for battered women, who had physical or mental health problems, or who could not obtain certification from a health care provider that they were unable to work. Some State agencies chose not to have statewide criteria but to leave the determination as to whom to give an exemption up to the eligibility worker in the local agencies.

To date, 35 States are currently using the exemptions or are planning to use them. Seventeen State agencies have decided not to use them: Arizona, Delaware, Guam, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Virgin Islands, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. This means at least 37 percent of the available monthly exemptions are going unused. The reasons these State agencies have cited for not using the exemptions include political, philosophical, and administrative.

We urge you to continue to work with the State agencies and to encourage them to use the exemptions available to them. For those State agencies that cite administrative complexity as a reason not to use the exemptions, please encourage them to consider giving every ABAWD a fourth month, or exempting an ABAWD if a workfare slot is not available.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call Moira Johnston of my staff at 703-305-2515.

/S/

Arthur T. Foley  
Director  
Program Development Division