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Subject: Revised statement for AP on ABAWD Time Limits

In 1996, a federal legislation was passed which limited ABAWDs' receipt of SNAP benefits to three months in a 36-month period for individuals who did not meet work requirements. Under the law, however, states can request a temporary waiver of the ABAWD time limit when the state has an employment rate of over 10% or it does not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for individuals. During the economic downturn, many states, qualified for and chose to apply for a waiver of the time limits applicable to ABAWDs.

South Carolina has applied for and received a state-wide waiver of the time limit requirements for ABAWDs since the early 2000s. South Carolina operated under a state-wide waiver through March 31, 2016. During this period of time, however, ABAWDs were still mandated to participate in employment training in order to receive benefits.

Due to declining unemployment rates in the state, South Carolina did not seek a waiver after March 31, 2016, and, therefore, reinstated the time limits established by federal law. DSS and our partners are committed to supporting the ABAWD population through employment training. In particular, South Carolina has employment training programs available for ABAWDs in all 46 counties with staff dedicated to providing ABAWDs support and assistance with obtaining gainful employment.

In order to qualify for a statewide waiver based on unemployment figures, the state must have a seasonally adjusted total unemployment rate (TUR) for the most recent three months reaching at least: (1) 6.5%; and (2) 110% of such TUR for the corresponding three-month periods ending in either or both of the two preceding calendar years. At this time, we do not anticipate South Carolina will qualify for a state-wide time-limit waiver in 2017 under this provision because the most recent data shows South Carolina with a TUR of 5.5%, and 85-87% of the preceding two years and that unemployment numbers are positively trending in the state. Based on the current Labor Surplus List, which is effective through September 30, 2016, 26 counties in South Carolina are designated as LSAs. Therefore, it is anticipated that South Carolina could qualify for a partial waiver in 2017 for those counties with qualifying labor surplus numbers, however, until the 2017 Labor Surplus List is published, the Department cannot determine how many counties would potentially qualify for a waiver of the time limit policy. The state made the decision not to seek a partial waiver due to the economic growth in the state and the declining unemployment rates, as well as a desire to ensure application of consistent standards across the state.

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