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**Subject:** Press Conference: DSS/DEW SNAP  
**Location:** 1st Floor Lobby, Statehouse  
**When:** 4/7/2016 10:00:00 AM - 10:30:00 AM

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**EVENT:** DSS/DEW SNAP Press Conference

**DATE:** Thursday, April 7, 2015

**TIME:** 10:00 AM

**LOCATION:** Statehouse, first floor lobby, Columbia, S.C.

**LOCATION SET-UP:** Flags, blue backdrop, podium, seal, PA System

**PURPOSE:** To announce that the South Carolina SNAP program, based on a lower unemployment rate, is no longer operating under a federal waiver that allowed ABAWDs to collect benefits without meeting federal food stamp time limit policies.

**ATTENDEES:**

- Director Susan Alford
- Director Cheryl Stanton

**SPEAKING ORDER/LINE-BY-LINE:**

- Governor Nikki Haley
- Director Susan Alford
- Director Cheryl Stanton (?)

**BACKGROUND:**

**There are approximately 61,000 ABAWDs in South Carolina at any given time. 36,000 of those are coded as having no known exemption factors and will be subject to these changes.**

As of December 2015, 797,616 individuals in South Carolina were receiving SNAP benefits. Of these, 46% are children under the age of 18. Approximately 27% of adult recipients are age 55 or older (15% of total SNAP population).

Under the federal food stamp regulations, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for recipients who are designated as Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents, or "ABAWD", is limited to three months in a 36-month period unless the individual meets ABAWD work requirements.

This is not a new requirement. However, beginning October 2015, most states who were previously operating under a federal waiver of the time limit policy no longer qualify because of lower unemployment rates. As of January 2016, seven States, including South Carolina, were operating under a statewide waiver of the time limit policy. South Carolina's waiver expired March 31, 2016.

## **WORK REQUIREMENTS FOR ABAWDs**

After April 1, 2016, ABAWDs who exhaust their three months of benefits and do not comply with the work requirement lose their SNAP benefits for the remainder of the 36-month time period. An ABAWD can regain eligibility during this time period by meeting the work requirement for 30 days, after which they remain eligible to receive SNAP for as long as they continue to meet work requirements.

In order to meet the work requirements, an ABAWD must be:

- Working at least 80 hours a month;
- Participating in a work program at least 20 hours per week; or
- Any combination of working and participating in a work program at least 80 hours monthly.

“Work” includes employment for wages, working in exchange for goods or services, or volunteering.

Examples of work programs available in South Carolina include: SNAP Employment & Training; Project HOPE; and WIOA.

## **ABLE-BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS (ABAWD) EXEMPTIONS**

An individual between the ages of 18 and 50 may be exempt from the ABAWD work requirement if he/she is:

1. Unable to work due to a physical or mental concern.
2. Responsible for a dependent child or incapacitated person.
3. Residing in a household where a household member is under age 18.
4. Pregnant.
5. An eligible student enrolled in school at least half-time.
6. Applying for or receiving unemployment benefits.
7. A regular participant in a drug or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program.

## **TALKING POINTS:**

- It's another great day in South Carolina.
- South Carolina's economy is on the move in so many ways:
  - We've announced over 75,000 jobs since 2011, and over \$18.5 billion in capital investment.
  - Our unemployment rate has decreased from 11.1% in 2011 to 5.5% and more people are working in South Carolina than ever before.
  - We've moved nearly 30,000 people from welfare to work.
- Now, when someone goes to apply for unemployment benefits or food stamps, they don't realize that they are actually in a job interview as well – because our agencies are going to work hard to match them with an employer to give them an opportunity to provide for themselves and for their families.
- This waiver is designed to assist individuals during economic downturns, when jobs are hard to find.
- But today, South Carolina's economy is growing at an unprecedented rate, and because of that, we're here today to celebrate the fact that we're no longer in need of this waiver.
- As of last Friday, the pre-existing federal work requirements for SNAP recipients are again applicable to South Carolinians.
- **Further, DSS has been collaborating with DEW to develop the best programs to help SNAP recipients get the training they need to acquire employment.**

- And I want to clear up a few misconceptions that we've seen over the last week:
  - This, in no way, means that the 60,000 South Carolinians receiving SNAP benefits will suddenly lose those benefits. Unless they satisfy one of seven exemptions, it simply means they are now required to work 80 hours per month, or be actively looking for a job through participating in work programs 20 hours per week.
  - This is not a NEW requirement. Federal work requirements have been on the books since 1996, and because of our economic strength, South Carolina is again in a position to follow those requirements.
- So again, this is a time to celebrate the success of South Carolina.
- We are announcing new jobs coming to the state almost every day, and the team standing with me today will continue to dedicate their time and effort to making sure our citizens are trained, willing and able to fill those positions so they can support their families and live happy fulfilled lives.