JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND BASIC SKILLS (JOBS) PROGRAM

Most people who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits are required to participate in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program.

1. PARTICIPATION:

There are various components, activities, and requirements in the JOBS program. While most people must participate in the JOBS Program in order to receive cash assistance, certain people are exempt.

You are exempt from JOBS participation if you are:

- Age 60 or older
- Pregnant and in the month before the due date
- Age 20 or older, during the first 6 months after giving birth (except you may be required to participate in parenting classes or family stability activities)
- Under 20 years of age, during the first 16 weeks after giving birth, except you may be required to participate in educational activities, parenting classes, and family stability activities
- A parent providing care for a family member living in the home who has a disability
- A recipient of SSI
- A non-needy caretaker relative
- Not a citizen and not authorized to work in the U.S
- If participation is likely to cause undue hardship or is not in the best interests of the child or caretaker relative
- VISTA volunteers
- Clients who are in the seventh and eight months of pregnancy and participate more than 10 hours per week.

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If you do not fall into one of these categories, and are required to participate in JOBS, you may still be excused from participating if you have “good cause”.

“Good cause” means that circumstances beyond your control prevented you from participating. If you have an explanation for why you weren’t able to participate, let your case worker know and ask whether it counts as good cause. Some examples of good cause are:

- The task you perform on a regular basis has a bad effect on your health or your failure to comply was due to a disability (physical or mental). You will need medical verification
- Participating in a required activity would expose you to an increased risk of domestic violence

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• Participation will cause hardship for your child
• Your worker denies or delays a support service payment that you need in order to comply with your case plan. See below
• The failure to comply is caused by a disability
• The wage paid is below minimum wage or if minimum wage laws don’t apply and the pay is less than the wage rate that is normally paid for similar work
• Adequate care is not available for your child or an incapacitated person in the household. You must try, however, to make adequate arrangements
• If there is a labor dispute or you have religious objections to joining a union or you already belong to a union and the employment violates the conditions of your union membership
• If the employer discriminates
• You are in your 7th or 8th month of pregnancy and your job or case plan requires more than 10 hours of work or participation
• Participation interferes with your participation in the Grande Ronde NEW program
• Other circumstances beyond your control that are not listed here.

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If you have a mental or physical condition that keeps you from participating (this includes problems you may have with alcohol and/or drugs), your worker will want verification of this. It may also become part of your case plan (explained below) to pursue treatment. Many disabled individuals, including people on SSI, are in the JOBS program, but their case plans do not require that they look for work. The case plan may require the disabled individual to continue medical treatment, for example.

2. JOBS COMPONENTS/ACTIVITIES:

There are different programs within JOBS. It is your worker’s job to work with you and help you decide what the best way is for you to become “self-sufficient.”

JOBS components and activities may vary, depending on which DHS office you go to.

Everyone applying for TANF must first receive an “initial orientation” to the JOBS Program. The way each branch does this may be different, but they will provide you with information about education, training and employment opportunities, support service payment (including child care), medical coverage, transportation and other services. They will also discuss which clients are exempt from participating in the JOBS program and what can happen if you don’t participate when you are required to.

The next step is an “assessment”. This is the process of gathering information to determine what JOBS activities are right for you. Testing is often a part of this process.

After assessment, you and your worker will sit down and do a “case plan.” This is a plan that you and your worker both agree to that will help you reach your employment/training goals. It should outline what your JOBS activities are and what support service payments you will be able to receive. The case plan will be tailored to your family’s needs. The case plan will address all of your barriers to work. Thus, it could
require only that you secure housing or locate child care until you are ready to look for work. Your case plan should be reviewed at least every six months.

There are many JOBS components (activities). They include:

- High school attendance or obtaining your GED for most teenage parents
- Parents as Scholars: This allows students to attend a two or four year college or technical school program. Participation in this program is limited to 1% of the TANF families. This program was closed to new applicants in July, 2011. OAR 461-190-0199
- Job Search: Just as it sounds. May include some resume writing and interviewing classes, etc.
- Vocational Training: This provides you specific vocational training that will lead to a career with an appropriate wage level and opportunity for employment.
- Family stability activities, such as drug and alcohol services, mental health services, physical health, domestic violence services
- Help applying for SSI benefits
- Family Support and Connection
- Self-initiated training

For some of these activities, you will be referred to another agency to receive services. These are JOBS components that require you to work. They are:

- Work Experience: Unpaid short-term work at a job site to help you develop good work habits and basic vocational skills. This cannot exceed nine consecutive months
- Sheltered Work: Intensive staff support, skill training, intervention and counseling that will enable you to function independently at work
- Paid Unsubsidized Work: Employment for a public or private employer.
- JOBS Plus: A program that provides TANF clients with on-the-job training. If you are selected for this program, you will not receive a TANF check or food stamps from DHS. You will be paid wages that are at least equal to the total of your cash grant and food stamps. DHS reimburses your employer for your wages OAR 461-001-0025; 461-190-0151 to -0212

3. COOPERATION:

When you are in JOBS, you will have to keep all of your appointments and attend all of the JOBS activities assigned to you. If you cannot attend, you may be excused if you had a good reason to miss. (For example: Court appearances, transportation or daycare problems, family problems, medical appointments, etc.)

If you know you cannot keep an appointment, you should tell your worker and reschedule it. Keep a log of all of your activities and contacts with your worker and other agencies that are helping you find employment.

There may be other reasons why you cannot attend your JOBS activities. If you have questions or concerns, call the Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292) or your local Legal Aid office for advice or possible representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs.
If you miss your JOBS appointment/activity, your worker must offer you a “re-engagement meeting.” This is a meeting between you and your worker to discuss the problems you are having with your assigned JOBS activities and to see if you had good cause for missing your JOBS activity.

**Re-engagement must be offered before you are “disqualified” (your grant reduced).** You can also request a re-engagement meeting if you disagree with your case plan or are having a problem with your JOBS assignments.

OAR 461-130-0330; 461-190-0231

If your worker decides you are not “cooperating” and you do not have good cause for not cooperating, your worker must take several step before you can be “disqualified” (also known as sanctioning):

- Your worker must offer screenings for physical or mental health needs, substance abuse, domestic violence, and learning needs. You do not have to agree to the screenings, but if you think you may have some special needs, the screenings will be helpful to you and may also help you to avoid the disqualification;

- A team of DHS staff that are familiar with your case must determine that:
  - You are willfully non-compliant and do not have good cause for failing to comply with a requirement of the program;
  - You have no barriers to participating in the JOBS program, or that you have refused to take appropriate steps to address identified barriers;
  - You have not met federally required participation rates (you are required to participate 30 hours per week. If you miss an activity but you have participated for 30 hours that week, you cannot be disqualified);
  - The team must also assess any risk of harm to your children if your grant is reduced.

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If your worker determines that you should be disqualified, your grant will be reduced.

*It is a progressive penalty. It gets worse as it goes.*

At the first level of disqualification, the person who isn’t cooperating will lose benefits. That means that your TANF grant will be reduced by the grant amount for one person. The first level of disqualification can last for up to three months or until the person who isn’t cooperating completes a two week period of cooperating with JOBS activities.

The second level is the suspension of the entire grant for one month. After one month, the grant will close and your family cannot receive TANF benefits for two months after that. You will receive a full grant when you sign a new case plan, agree to cooperate, and actually cooperate with your case plan for two weeks, as long as this happens while you are at the second level of disqualification. **If you agree to cooperate but there are no JOBS activities**
available for you, your grant will still be opened again.

OAR 461-130-0330, OAR 461-130-0335

Disqualifications are progressive. This means if you do not agree to cooperate and demonstrate that you are cooperating for two weeks, your disqualification automatically goes to the next level of disqualification at the beginning of the month.

Even if you agree to cooperate, you will always have the disqualification on your record. That means the next time you don’t cooperate, you will be disqualified at the next level.

Example: you are disqualified for missing an appointment. Since it is your first disqualification ever, you are told that you are at level one and you will be removed from the grant, but the other people on your grant will still get benefits. You immediately meet with your case manager, sign a new case plan, and go to all of your JOBS activities for the next two weeks. Your worker will end the disqualification and give you your grant back. Your benefits will be paid back to the date you signed your case plan. But, the next time you miss an appointment, you will be disqualified at level two, not at level one again.

If you believe that:

- you were cooperating, or
- your case manager did not offer you the assessments to see if you have barriers, or
- you have barrier that prevented you from participating in your JOBS activities, or
- you were participating in your JOBS activities enough to meet the “federal participating rates” (30 hours per week)

**It is important to request a hearing.** This is true even if your worker restores your grant after you agree to cooperate. **If you do not request a hearing at that time, then you lose your right to clear your record. Remember, once you have a disqualification on your record, it will stay there unless you have a hearing and an Administrative Law Judge finds that you should not have been disqualified.** So, if you have another disqualification later, it will pick up at the same level. You will not be allowed to start with the first level of disqualification and you will not be allowed to argue at a hearing that a previous disqualification was wrong.

OAR 461-130-0330, 0335

In order to have a hearing, you must fill out a hearing request form and file it within **90 days.** But, if you want your benefits to remain the same, you must file your hearing request before the date that your benefits will be reduced or closed. To obtain the hearing request form go to your local DHS office and ask the receptionist for a **DHS Form 443 (Administrative Hearing Request)** or get it on the Internet. (Go to [www.Oregon.gov/DHS](http://www.Oregon.gov/DHS). Click on “Find a Form” on the left side of the web page. Type in “443” for the number and click on “Search.”)

Immediately fill out the form and give to the receptionist. **Ask the receptionist for a receipt to prove you turned in the form.** To find out about your hearing rights, call the **Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292)** or your local Legal Aid office for advice or possible representation. Go to [www.oregonlawhelp.org](http://www.oregonlawhelp.org) for a directory of legal aid programs.

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4. SUPPORT SERVICES:

While you are participating in JOBS, you might be eligible to receive Support Services. These are services (payments) that you need to be able to successfully follow your case plan, look for work or maintain your job. Not everyone who participates in the JOBS program will get a support services payment.

These services/payments are available to people who are job ready or close to being job ready, or for a teen parent to get a GED or high school diploma. A person who is not job ready but needs help with drug and alcohol services, mental health services, attending medical appointments or services, or rehabilitative activities may also receive support service payments. The payments include, but are not limited to:

- Childcare
- Transportation
- Other payments needed to look for work, accept a job offer, or complete DHS approved vocational training

DHS will not make payments to help with housing or utilities under this program. But, if you are a victim of domestic violence and qualify for TA-DVS benefits, you may get help with housing under that program.

OAR 461-190-0211

If you get a job, you may be eligible to receive some of these benefits after your grant closes. These transitional benefits are available to you for 12 months after the grant closes, and the total amount is limited to $1,000.

OAR 461-190-0241

5. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

This flyer is designed to give you basic information about the JOBS Program.

- If you have received a notice of disqualification, have been denied JOBS support services, or have been denied payments, you should request a hearing. To do this, you must fill out DHS Form 443 (Administrative Hearing Request) and file it at your local DHS office. You must do this within 45 days from the date on your notice if you have been denied a JOBS support service payment, and within 90 days if you receive a notice of disqualification. Also, ask your worker to show you the rule(s) s/he is relying on to make the decision.

- If you disagree with your case plan, you should ask for a re-engagement meeting.

- If you think your worker is not treating you with respect, you should complete a grievance form. Grievance and Hearing forms should be out in the DHS lobby. If not, ask the receptionist to give you one.

If you have questions or concerns about the JOBS program, call the Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292) or your local Legal Aid office for advice or possible representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs.

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