

Ohio Works First (OWF) Cash Assistance

What is it?

Ohio Works First (OWF) is a monthly cash payment for some pregnant women and families with children. Your county Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) runs this program.

I already get OWF

Q: I am supposed to recertify in March/April/May. How do I do this now that Job and Family Services offices are closed?

A: Your OWF benefits will automatically be extended for six (6) months. JFS will contact you when it is time to recertify.

Q: Do I still have to do my work assignment during the COVID-19 emergency period?

A: Maybe. Some counties have given all OWF recipients good cause for not completing work assignments. Other counties are changing work requirements so people can do them from home. The county must give you good cause if you are unable to do your assignment due to illness or the statewide stay-at-home order.

Q: I could not complete my work assignment because of COVID-19 and now the county is sanctioning me. What should I do?

A: Call Legal Aid at 241-9400 so we can talk to you about your case, and see if you have good cause.

I do not already get OWF

Q: Am I eligible for OWF?

A: In order to get OWF, you must:

1. Have a child in your household*
*Child means someone under age 18, or someone under age 19 who is still enrolled in high school;
-OR be at least 6 months pregnant, AND
2. Have income lower than 49% of the Federal Poverty Level. (This is \$12,838 for a family of four.)

Q: How long can I get OWF?

A: OWF is time limited. Each month you are on the program counts towards your limit. You can only get OWF for 36 months. After 36 months, in order to get more OWF, you have to show good cause or a need for a hardship extension.

Q: How do I apply?

A: You can apply:

- Online at: <https://benefits.ohio.gov/>.
- By paper application*

*Because of the COVID-19 outbreak, many

JFS offices are trying to limit in-person contact. Please check your county's website or contact them by phone to determine the best way to submit a paper application.

Q: After I submit my application, what happens?

A: You will need to:

- Complete a phone interview, unless it is waived
- Provide any documents requested by JFS
- Meet with a caseworker* for an appraisal and to develop a work assignment

* Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, many counties are relying on phone calls and mailing documents instead of in-person meetings.

Q: How will I receive OWF?

A: You will be given an electronic benefits card called the Ohio EPPIcard. The card works just like a debit card. Your payment will be loaded to the card on the first of each month.

Q: What is the maximum amount of assistance I can receive?

Family Size	1	2	3	4	5
Monthly Allotment	\$302	\$412	\$505	\$623	\$729

Q: Once I am approved, what do I need to do?

A: You'll need to:

- Comply with the work requirements you reviewed with your caseworker
- Comply with the Child Support Enforcement Agency in order to establish paternity/child support for the children in your household.

Q: How has Covid-19 affected my requirements?

A: Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, each county is handling compliance differently. If you have any questions about your requirements, contact your caseworker. If JFS does not adjust your work assignment, or will not give you good cause when your failure was due to the pandemic, please contact Legal Aid.

Q: What If I do not comply with OWF requirements?

A: If you do not comply, you risk a sanction. An OWF sanction stops your entire benefit for 1, 3 or 6 months, depending on the level. Also, at the highest level of sanction, JFS will terminate the adult portion of the Food Stamps, and the adult's Medicaid.

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If you have questions or need legal assistance, please call the
Legal Aid line at (513) 241-9400
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