

What is the Family Assistance Program?

- Family Assistance is Alabama's welfare program to help poor families with children.
- Before the end of 1996, it replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (ADC or AFDC). Many people still call it ADC.
- Family Assistance pays a family a small monthly payment.
- It also allows the family to get Medicaid, food stamps and any child care necessary for a parent to work.

Where do I apply for Family Assistance?

- Apply at your local office of the Department of Human Resources.
- Most people call the Department "DHR".

Am I eligible for Family Assistance?

- If you have very little income, and you have a child under 18, you may be eligible.
- If you are now working full-time at minimum wage, you have too much income for Family Assistance.
- But, if you are on Family Assistance and then get a job, DHR does not count the income for six months.
 - You stay eligible for Family Assistance, Medicaid, and child care.
 - After the checks stop, you can get at least another year of Medicaid and child care.
 - You must promptly report your job to your worker to get any of these extra benefits.

Are there limits on Family Assistance?

You can only receive a total of five years of Family Assistance in your lifetime.

What do I have to do to get Family Assistance?

- First, go to the DHR office to apply.
- When you apply, a worker will give you an appointment.
- He or she will also tell you to look for work between the application date and the appointment date. If you do not look for work, you will probably not get Family Assistance.
- Once DHR approves you for Family Assistance, you have to register at the Employment Office, search for work and spend up to 40 hours per week in a work-like activity. This can be:
 - Community service "volunteer" work
 - A job "preparation" placement
 - Job readiness classes
 - "Countable" vocational training
 - "Countable" education, or
 - "On-the-job" training
- You and your "JOBS" worker talk and decide together on your "Family Responsibility Plan." Be sure that it gives you help you need and want, and that you will be able to do what you agree to do.
- You also must help DHR pursue child support, unless you have a good reason not to. One type of good reason is your fear of abuse by the child's father.

Are there any exceptions?

- Yes. After an evaluation, DHR "defers" some people.
- You can get a deferment by showing you need to be home with an ill or disabled child.
- You can also get a doctor's statement showing you can't work.
- Victims of severe domestic violence can get deferred. If you go to a shelter, ask your SAILS worker there.
- People in drug or alcohol treatment programs get deferred.

- Most adult mothers with a child under 12 weeks old are exempt.
- If you have a child under 6 and cannot get good child care, you can get deferred. However, DHR thinks it can get child care for everyone.

What happens when I don't do my work activities?

- At first, DHR reduces your Family Assistance check.
- If you do not start to meet work requirements in three months, your whole family's grant will stop.
- After the grant stops, your family can't get Family Assistance for several months.
- If you have been on Family Assistance more than two years, or if you quit or refuse a job without good cause, your check stops right away.

Are there ways to avoid the penalties?

- Yes.
- First, you can whatever you were supposed to do (comply).
- Second, you can show you have a right to a deferral.
- Third, you can show good cause for not doing the work activity.

What is "good cause"?

DHR will find good cause if any of five things are true:

1. You were ill
2. You had to stay home with a family member who was seriously ill
3. You had problems with child care for a child under 6
4. You had transportation problems. For example, your car broke down, or the driver who was supposed to pick you up did not.
5. You had any other kind of personal or family crisis.

How do I show good cause?

- You have to talk with your worker.
- Often, the worker will accept your word, but sometimes the worker will ask for proof, such as a doctor's note.

What is DHR still wants to stop my check?

You have the right ask for a fair hearing. The notice from DHR says how to make this request. A Legal Services advocate can help with a fair hearing.

Information Source: <http://www.alabamalegalhelp.org/resource/the-family-assistance-program?ref=dPOnN>