

## Ohio Works First (OWF) Extensions



### What is Ohio Works First?

Ohio Works First (OWF) is Ohio's cash assistance program for families with children. Generally, Ohio limits cash assistance to 36 months, other than in "child only" OWF cases. Child Only OWF is a benefit paid to a caretaker relative (non-parent) for the child/children only. Through extensions, you can get up to 60 months total OWF. There are 3 types of state extensions: **(1) State Hardship (2) Good Cause (3) Domestic Violence**. There is also a **Federal Hardship extension**.



### Have you used up your 36-months of OWF cash assistance?

If so, you may be eligible for extra months of OWF if you have a child in your home or, are at least 6 months pregnant, and the **time limit created a hardship** or made it hard to meet the needs or care for your family. You should talk with your local JFS about requesting a hardship extension.



### When should I apply for a State, Domestic Violence, or Federal Hardship extension?

You should apply for a State (County), Domestic Violence or Federal Hardship extension if:

- You get notice that your OWF will be stopping because you used your 36 months;
- You or others in your home are suffering from threats or acts of domestic violence;
- You get notice that your OWF will stop because you used 60 months;
- An extension expired and the time limit still makes it hard for you to support your family



### Where do I apply for an OWF extension?

You can ask for an Extension form from your local JFS. You can go in person to request a form or do so over the phone.

**TIP:** When you submit your Extension Request form and/or application for OWF ask for a copy of your request AND any documents you give to JFS. Get a document receipt to prove what you gave your local JFS. To find your local JFS, see: [jfs.ohio.gov/County/County\\_Directory.pdf](https://jfs.ohio.gov/County/County_Directory.pdf)



### What happens if my extension request is denied?

After you apply for an extension, you will get written notice of JFS' decision, with appeal rights. If you disagree with the decision, you can request a state hearing within 90 days after the mailing date on the notice. Fill out the hearing request form that is part of the notice. Then:

- Mail it to the Bureau of State Hearings, or
- Give it to the County JFS office, or
- Fax it to the Bureau of State Hearings at (614) 728-9574, or
- Email your request to the Bureau of State Hearings at [BSH@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:BSH@jfs.ohio.gov).

**TIP:** Keep a copy or take a photo of your request if possible. If you give it to your local JFS, ask for a document receipt. If you mail it, make a note about the date it was mailed. Be sure to follow the instructions on your notice.



### **How can I get legal help?**

If you have questions, are refused a request for hardship or application, need help with an OWF Extension, you can call 1-800-589-5888 for your local legal aid office. Offices hours are Monday through Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm, except holidays.



## **Understanding OWF Hardship Extensions in Ohio**

### **What does Hardship mean?**

A hardship is anything that makes it hard for you to meet the needs of your family. Examples include: health problems in your household (yourself, spouse, or child); you are caring for a disabled or ill family member; housing issues; pregnancy; domestic violence, mental, or sexual abuse; limited education; inability to pay your monthly bills; job loss; inability to find a job; and other similar issues.

### **What is a State Hardship Extension?**

State Hardship Extensions are up to 24 extra months of OWF which can be granted by your local JFS. They are also called County Hardships. Each county JFS has its own policy for hardship extensions, including the maximum length of extensions and the allowable reasons. These rules are found in the county Hardship Plan. **Ohio law requires your local JFS to look at each assistance group's unique special circumstances (not only the reasons in their policy) that caused the need for more months of OWF.**

### **What is a Good Cause Extension?**

A Good Cause Extension allows you to continue receiving OWF after 36 months. It is available only after you go 24 months without receiving OWF. Your local JFS determines whether you have a good cause to receive further OWF. Examples of things JFS may consider good cause include job loss/inability to find suitable work, divorce, domestic violence, or other circumstances which affect your family.

**TIP:** When a good cause extension is granted, you should get OWF for an additional 24 months IF you meet the other requirements. Your local JFS should NOT grant shorter good cause extensions.

### **What is a Domestic Violence Extension?**

A Domestic Violence Extension is a waiver of the 36-month time limit if you and/or your family members have been physically, mentally, or sexually abused or threatened and you need OWF to support your family while you address the domestic violence issues and become safe.

## **What is a Federal Hardship Extension?**

A Federal Hardship Extension allows families to get OWF beyond the 60-month federal limit. Ohio grants federal extensions based on the same reasons as a state (county) hardship. Your local JFS should look at the assistance group's unique circumstances to decide if an extension is needed.

## **How do I apply for a hardship extension?**

If you are not on OWF now, reapply for OWF and ask for a hardship request form. If your OWF will be stopping because of the 36-month time limit, you should ask for a hardship request form and submit it to your local JFS **before** your OWF ends.

---

*The information on this flyer is not legal advice. If you are seeking representation or legal advice, please contact SEOLS. An attorney-client relationship does not exist between you and SEOLS.*

---

## **How to contact SEOLS:**

**[www.seols.org](http://www.seols.org)**

<b>Athens Office</b>	<b>740.594.3558</b> <b>800.686.3669</b>	<b>New Philadelphia Office</b>	<b>330.339.3998</b> <b>800.686.3670</b>
Serving Gallia, Meigs, Morgan, Noble, Vinton, and Washington Counties		Serving Coshocton, Guernsey, Holmes, and Tuscarawas Counties	
<b>Chillicothe Office</b>	<b>740.773.0012</b> <b>800.686.3668</b>	<b>Portsmouth Office</b>	<b>740.354.7563</b> <b>800.837.2508</b>
Serving Fairfield, Fayette, Hocking, Jackson, Pickaway, Pike, and Ross Counties		Serving Adams, Lawrence, and Scioto Counties	
<b>Newark Office</b>	<b>740.345.0850</b> <b>888.831.9412</b>	<b>Steubenville Office</b>	<b>740.283.4781</b> <b>800.837.4781</b>
Serving Knox, Licking, Muskingum, and Perry Counties		Serving Belmont, Carroll, Harrison, Jefferson, and Monroe Counties	

*SEOLS does not discriminate against any person on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, disability, age, ancestry, or military status in admission, treatment, or participation in our programs, services and activities, or in our hiring and employment practices.*