

Can DSS reduce my TCA?

Before reducing your TCA due to work sanction, the Department of Social Services (DSS) must always provide you with a 30 day “**conciliation period.**” DSS must:

- Contact you to find out why you did not attend the work meeting or program.
- Assist you with any barriers that prevent you from complying.
- Explore whether you qualify for an **exemption** or **good cause** from work.
- Send you a letter offering a “**conciliation conference.**”

After the 30 day “conciliation period,” if you do not have “good cause” or an “exemption” from work, DSS can reduce your TCA. Your TCA should never close due to non-compliance with work.

At most, DSS can reduce your TCA by 30% of the adult portion (25% of the total benefit). Example: if your TCA is \$753 per month, DSS can reduce your TCA by \$57 due to non-compliance with work. Your benefit would be \$696 each month. DSS must resume your full TCA benefit once you are in compliance.

CONTACT US

Do you disagree with a TCA termination, reduction, or referral to the work program?

You have the right to appeal.

Call us to request free legal representation.



(410) 625-9409

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PUBLIC JUSTICE CENTER



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) - work program, good cause and exemptions

What is “work experience”?

Work Experience is an unpaid work activity, performed while receiving TCA, that is supposed to provide skills, knowledge and work habits necessary to obtain a job.

DSS may require a work-eligible individual to participate in work activity for a maximum of:

	Maximum work hours per week:
Single parent or caretaker with a child under 6 years old	20
Individuals with a child at least 6 years old	30
Two work eligible parents	35 combined
Two work eligible parents receiving federally funded child care assistance	55 combined

What the Department can NEVER do

- Require you to work 40 hours a week.
- Terminate your Temporary Cash Assistance benefits for not doing the work program.
- Require you to turn timesheets in person. DSS must accept timesheets by email, fax, or other methods.
- Require you to work if you have a reason you are unable to work (called “good cause” or an “exemption”).
- Require you to do the unpaid “work experience” if you prefer a different work activity.

What if I can’t work?

You have a right to be excused temporarily from the work requirement IF you have “good cause”:

- Temporary illness
- Court-required appearances or temporary incarceration
- Domestic violence
- Homelessness or housing insecurity
- A family crisis that threatens normal family functioning
- Inability to obtain childcare
- Breakdown in transportation
- Disability accommodation was not provided

You may also be “exempt” from the work activity requirement IF:

- It is your first 6 months receiving TCA
- You are caring for a child under one year old (who also receives TCA)
- You are unable to work due to a health condition or disability

Can DSS require me to do unpaid “work experience” or “community service” for work activity?

No, the type of work activity is your choice. DSS can refer you to unpaid “work experience” or “community service” **only when all the following apply:**

1. Private Employment is NOT available.
2. You have not already completed 90 days of work experience in the last 3 years.
3. DSS offers you at least 3 work activity options. Only ONE of the options can be “work experience” or “community service.”
4. You chose “work experience” or “community service.” DSS cannot force you to pick this option.
5. DSS informs you that you are allowed to change your work assignment at any time.
6. The work experience being offered provides you with skills that match your personal, career, and family goals to support economic mobility.

IF DSS does not meet the requirements for referring you to “work experience,” you can request a transfer to a different work activity.