Bulletin #26-21-09: DHS Announces Work or Community Engagement Requirements for Certain Adults Enrolled in MA or EMA

Trisha Stachowski

Health Care Eligibility & Access Division

Disclaimer

The material in this slide deck is subject to change pending issuance of further guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

DHS Bulletin #26-21-09

- Date of Bulletin: November 5, 2026
- Announced policy and implementation of a new federal requirement that imposed work or community engagement requirements as a condition of eligibility for certain adults applying for or enrolled in Medical Assistance (MA) or Emergency Medical Assistance (EMA)
- Section 71119 of Public Law 119-21, also known as the federal budget reconciliation bill, House Resolution 1 (H.R. 1), the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), or the Working Families Tax Cut legislation enacted on July 4, 2025

Work or Community Engagement Policy

Policy goes into effect on January 1, 2027

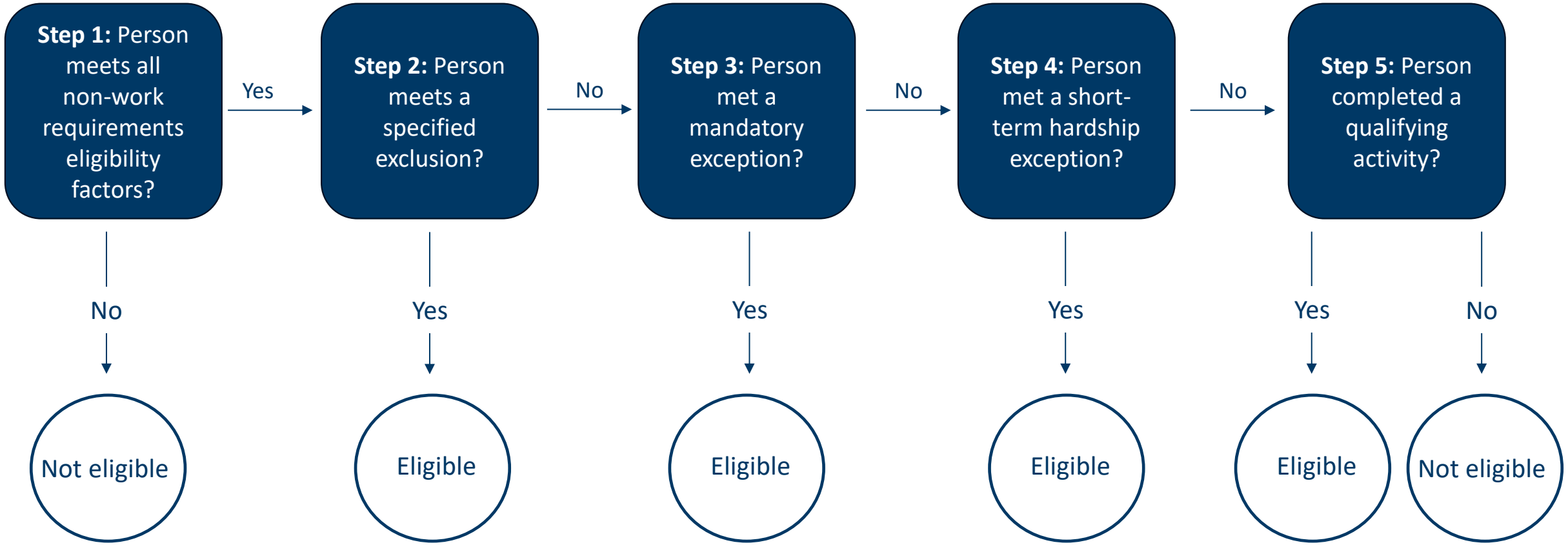
Applies only to MA and EMA adults without children

People eligible for MA or EMA under all other bases of eligibility are not subject to work or community engagement requirements

Adults Without Children Basis of Eligibility

- Criteria for adults without children basis of eligibility:
  - age 19 through 64
  - not enrolled in MA under the parent, caretaker relative, pregnant person, former foster care youth, or disability bases of eligibility
  - not entitled to or enrolled in Medicare Part A or enrolled in Medicare Part B
  - not a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient
  - not a former SSI recipient who stopped receiving SSI when they began receiving Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI) benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA) under a deceased spouse or deceased or retired parent's earning record, and
  - not eligible for MA under Section 1619(a) or (b) of the Social Security Act

High-Level Work Requirements Process Flow



Step 2: Specified Exclusions

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Caregiver of a child under age 14 or a disabled individual
- Veteran with a total disability
- Medically frail or having complex medical needs
- Meeting the work requirements for MFIP
- Member of a household that gets SNAP benefits and are subject to SNAP work requirements
- Participating in a drug or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program
- Currently in jail or prison

Specified Exclusion – Example 1

- Brittany is an adult without children and applies for MA in January 2027
- On the application she indicates she is currently a family caregiver of a disabled individual – since Brittany meets an exclusion in the month of her application, work requirements do not apply to her
- The information she submitted on her application is verified and she is approved for MA starting January 1, 2027

Step 3: Mandatory Exceptions

Were under age 19

Were eligible for MA or EMA under a federally mandated eligibility group

Were entitled to or enrolled in Medicare Part A or enrolled in Medicare Part B

Were released from jail or prison in the last three months

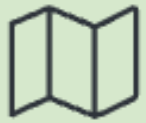
Were previously a specified excluded individual

Step 4: Short-Term Hardship Exceptions

Received care in an inpatient hospital, nursing facility, facility for people with developmental disabilities, psychiatric hospital, or other services of similar acuity



Traveled away from their community to get medical care necessary to treat a serious or complex medical condition for themselves or a dependent



Lived in a county where the President has declared a natural disaster



Lived in a county where the unemployment rate was at or above 1.5 times the national unemployment rate or 8%, whichever is less



Step 5: Qualifying Activities

Income of at least $580
(80 hours times the federal hourly minimum wage)

Average monthly income of $580 from seasonal employment for MA or EMA Eligibility

Worked or participated in other qualifying activities:

- 80 hours per month of work or community service or work program
- Enrollment in an educational program at least half-time
- Any combination of these activities totaling 80 hours

Step 5: Qualifying Activities

Income of at least $580
(80 hours times the federal hourly minimum wage)

Average monthly income of $580 from seasonal employment for MA or EMA eligibility

Worked or participated in other qualifying activities:

- 80 hours per month of work or community service or work program
- Enrollment in an educational program at least half-time
- Any combination of these activities totaling 80 hours

The Lookback Period

- Lookback period: the timeframe when an applicant or enrollee must have met a mandatory or short-term hardship exception or qualifying activity
- Application: the month prior to the month of application
- Renewal: the certification period that began the month of application (for first renewal) or the certification period that began with their last renewal

Lookback Period – Example 2

- Albert is an adult without children and applies for MA in February 2027
- He does not meet an exclusion from work requirements, so to be eligible he must have met an exception or a qualifying activity in the lookback period: January 2027
- He attests that he worked 80 hours in January
- The information he submitted on his application is verified and he is approved for MA starting February 1, 2027

Verification

- DHS must first attempt to verify whether a person meets an exclusion or is an applicable individual who met an exception or qualifying activity in the lookback period
- Verification will be attempted using trusted data sources
- Applicants or enrollees may be required to provide proof if trusted data sources are not available or cannot verify the information
- Applications and renewals remain incomplete until required verification is resolved

Retroactive MA and Work Requirements

Work requirements do not apply to eligibility for retroactive MA or EMA.

Applicants who are adults without children are not subject to work requirements for the months they are requesting retroactive coverage.

Applicants must still meet all other MA eligibility requirements to be eligible for retroactive MA or EMA.

Implementation

- Beginning with applications received on or after January 1, 2027, applicants must meet work requirements to be eligible for MA or EMA for adults without children
- For an adult without children who is not enrolled but is included in a family member's MA or MinnesotaCare case and is requesting MA or EMA on or after January 1, 2027, the person must meet work requirements
- Adults without children who were enrolled in MA or EMA before January 1, 2027, must meet work requirement at their next scheduled eligibility renewal initiated in January 2027 or later.

Thank You!