



## State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT  
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STEPHEN CHA, MD, MHSR  
*Commissioner*

NATASHA JOHNSON  
*Assistant Commissioner*

The following Decision is distributed for your information. This Decision has been made in consideration of the specific facts of this case. This Decision is not to be interpreted as establishing any new mandatory policy or procedure otherwise officially promulgated.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

### FINAL DECISION

OAL DKT. NO. HPW 14111-25 G.S.

AGENCY DKT. NO. C137715001 (ATLANTIC CO. DEPT OF FAM. & COM. DEV)

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's denial of his application for Work First New Jersey/General Assistance ("WFNJ/GA") benefits. The Agency denied Petitioner's application for WFNJ/GA benefits, contending that he had exhausted his 60-month cumulative lifetime limit of WFNJ benefits. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. This matter was initially scheduled for a fair hearing on October 1, 2025, at which time a pre-hearing conference was held and the parties were provided time to obtain additional information. The hearing was rescheduled for October 17, 2025, but had to be postponed until October 20, 2025. On October 20, 2025, the Honorable Rebecca C. Lafferty, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a telephonic plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. The record was held open to allow for the submission of additional documentation and closed on October 23, 2025. The matter was reopened on November 5, 2025, for further information and documentation, and then closed again on November 20, 2025. On December 8, 2025, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, reversing the Agency's determination and remanding the matter back to the Agency.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development, Department of Human Services, I have considered the ALJ's Initial Decision, and following an independent review of the record, I hereby ADOPT the Initial Decision, REVERSE the Agency's determination and REMAND the matter back to the Agency for further action, based on the discussion below.

"Eligibility for cash assistance benefits shall be limited to a lifetime total of 60 cumulative months for an adult individual." See N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.3(a). "At the end of an individual adult recipient's 60 cumulative months of receipt of cash assistance, the assistance unit shall no longer be eligible to receive [WFNJ] assistance." See N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.3(a)(1). However, an individual may receive additional months of cash assistance if he/she qualifies for an exemption from, or extension of, the time limit, as set forth at N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.4 and -2.5, respectively. In relevant part, a recipient is exempt from the 60-month cumulative lifetime WFNJ limit if a "physical or mental impairment, defect or injury prevents him or her from engaging in full-time employment for a period of 12 or more months on a minimum of one WFNJ/MED-1, Examination Report." N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.4(a)(3)(i).

Here, on December 1, 2024, the Agency sent Petitioner a Notification Form indicating that his WFNJ/GA benefits case would close as he had reached his sixty-month cumulative lifetime limit for cash assistance benefits. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1 at 3. Following the termination of his WFNJ/GA benefits in March, 2025, Petitioner submitted a new application for WFNJ/GA benefits to the Agency, which was denied on July 28, 2025, on the basis that Petitioner had exceeded his sixty-month cumulative lifetime limit for said benefits. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-3.



The ALJ in this matter issued a very thorough and comprehensive Initial Decision, outlining the procedural history, providing a detailed factual timeline, and rendering a well thought out analysis, applying law to fact. The ALJ found that, based upon the records produced by Petitioner, that over the course of his receipt of WFNJ/TANF and/or WFNJ/GA benefits, Petitioner was incarcerated during various times from 2011 through 2022, and the ALJ performed an analysis of dates of Petitioner's incarceration and dates for which Petitioner received WFNJ indicate overlap. See Initial Decision at 2-4; see also Exhibits P-1, R-1, R-2. The ALJ found that the total overlap for the time periods for which Petitioner received WFNJ benefits, and the time of his incarceration was 20 months and one-hundred forty-five days, which should be subtracted from the total months Petitioner received WFNJ benefits. See Initial Decision at 5. Based upon the foregoing, the ALJ concluded that Petitioner was only eligible to receive 57.1667 months of the total months being attributed to his lifetime limit, and that he would remain eligible for an additional 2.8333 months of cash assistance. Ibid. Accordingly, the ALJ concluded that the Agency's denial of Petitioner's July, 2025 application for WFNJ/GA benefits was improper and must be reversed. See Initial Decision at 7. I agree. Further, the ALJ found that Petitioner should be eligible to receive an additional 2.8333 months of WFNJ/GA benefits, if he otherwise meets other eligibility criteria. Ibid. I also agree.

By way of comment, there is no indication in the record if Petitioner has sought an exemption from, or extension of, the WFNJ lifetime limit.

Accordingly, the Initial Decision is hereby ADOPTED, and the Agency's determination is REVERSED, and the matter REMANDED to the Agency for action, as outlined above.

Officially approved final version. January 27, 2026

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Natasha Johnson  
Assistant Commissioner

