One of the key features of welfare for families with children is the lifetime limit of 60 months of family assistance cash grants. Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) caregivers (the parents, relatives, and guardians responsible for children in these families) each have their own total of months counted toward the time limit. A case is closed after a caregiver on the case reaches 60 counted months. Months of welfare receipt in other states can count toward this total.

Some months of assistance are exempted from the count. Months not counted include months of MFIP received while working toward a high school diploma or GED as a teen, while living on an Indian reservation with a not-employed rate of 50 percent or more, while complying with a family violence waiver, or when past age 60.

Some MFIP cases have no eligible adults, only eligible children. Child-only cases do not accumulate months toward the time limit. About two-fifths of caregivers not MFIP-eligible receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), two-fifths are relative caregivers, and one-fifth are undocumented adults.

Cases can be extended beyond 60 months, if the caregivers continue to meet and document certain hardship conditions or are employed a minimum number of hours and have earnings below the MFIP exit amount. A case in sanction for not complying with MFIP rules in month 60, however, can never be extended.

Figure 1 presents December 2009 MFIP eligible-adult cases grouped by counted month categories. The zero-months group has been exempt each month they were on MFIP. The largest group includes those on in their first counted year. Fourteen percent of cases were extended. More than a third of these had been extended for more than three years, the main reasons being long-term illness/incapacity and mental illness. Ninety-five percent of the extended cases were in Family Stabilization Services (FSS), a program within MFIP to help families in trouble to move toward work.

Through December 2009, 15,010 adults had reached 60 counted months. Of these, 19 percent were then eligible on an extended MFIP case and 10 percent had cases open for other reasons, mainly their case having changed to child-only or food-only (no cash grant) status. The remainder were off MFIP.

For more information on MFIP cases and caregivers, see the latest annual MFIP and DWP Caseload and Participant Characteristics Reports and At the Limit: MFIP Sixty-Month Time Limit Report on [http://www.mn.gov/dhs](http://www.mn.gov/dhs) under Children and Families/Economic Supports/MFIP/Reports.