

The 2003 Family Income Guidelines

ACYF Administration on Children, Youth and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Administration for Children and Families	
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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM [[See Attachments at the bottom](#)]

TO: Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: The 2003 Family Income Guidelines

INFORMATION:

Children are eligible to participate in Head Start and Early Head Start if they are from low-income families, if their families are eligible for public assistance or would potentially be eligible in the absence of child care services. The Head Start Act establishes income eligibility for participation in Head Start programs based on the poverty guidelines updated annually in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2). The attached 2003 Family Income Guidelines were published in the Federal Register on February 7, 2003 (Vol. 68, No. 26, pp. 6456-6458). The 2003 Guidelines must be used to determine eligibility for Head Start for families who are eligible because they have low incomes.

For information about determining eligibility for families who receive public assistance, please see the July 29, 1999 Program Instruction titled, "Receipt of Public Assistance and Determining Eligibility for Head Start", ACYF-PI-HS-99-06. Public assistance means participation in the TANF program (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) or the SSI program (Supplemental Security Income). The 1999 Program Instruction should be followed in conjunction with this Information Memorandum for Head Start recruitment efforts. You are encouraged to visit our Head Start website http://www.headstartinfo.org/publications/im99/pi99_06.htm for this [PI](#) , and also other pertinent eligibility information.

The definition of "income" appears in the Head Start regulations at 45 C.F.R. 1305.2(i). "Income" is defined in the regulations as "gross cash income and includes earned income, military income (including pay and allowances), veteran's benefits, Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and public assistance benefits." The attached list of examples of "income" is derived from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P60-185 and earlier reports in the same series. It provides a more detailed guidance on the term "income" than is found in 45 C.F.R. 1305.2(i).

The definition of "family" to be used in determining eligibility is found in 45 CFR 1305.2(e), which defines family as all persons living in the same household who are:

- Supported by the income of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child enrolling or participating in the program, and
- related to the parent(s) or guardian(s) by blood, marriage or adoption.

Grantees should note that Congress has provided for the disregard of certain benefits paid to certain children of Vietnam veterans when establishing eligibility for federally assisted programs. Pursuant to sections 421 and 422(c) of Pub. L. 104-204, effective October 1, 1997, title 38, United States Code, was amended by the addition of a new chapter 18, under which certain VA benefits and services are provided to children of Vietnam veterans (including adult children) who were born with the congenital defect spina bifida. A subsequent amendment to chapter 18 made by section 401 of Pub. L. 106-419, effective December 1, 2001, provides VA benefits and services to children of women Vietnam veterans born with certain other birth defects. Included among the benefits provided for these children is a monthly monetary allowance paid at a rate that is based on the child's level of disability. Section 1823(c) of title 38, United States Code, states that "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of law, a monetary allowance paid an individual under [chapter 18] shall not be considered as income or resources in determining eligibility for, or the amount of benefits under, any Federal or federally assisted program." The disregard should be applied in determining eligibility under the Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Questions about the Income Guidelines should be addressed to your ACF Regional Office or the American Indian or Migrant Programs Branches.

Windy M. Hill

Associate Commissioner
Head Start Bureau

Attachments:

[Family Income Guidelines, 2003](#)

[Definition of Income](#)

The 2003 Family Income Guidelines. ACYF-IM-HS-03-03. DHHS/ACYF/ACF/HSB. 2003. English.