**WIOA/TANF YOUTH ELIGIBILITY POLICY**

**Purpose**

This policy ensures every participant who receives Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth program funded services is eligible and registered to receive those services and that all participants receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Youth program services are eligible and registered.

**Affected Parties**

This policy applies to all Pittsburgh/Allegheny County WIOA Title I Youth participants, TANF Youth participants, and to individuals interested in enrolling in these programs. All WIOA Title I Youth program staff, TANF Youth program staff, and Partner4Work Youth program staff are responsible for implementing this policy.

**References**

* WIOA Section 3(2), (5), (15), (16), (36)
* WIOA Section 129(a)(1)(B) and (C)
* US Department of Health and Human Services - [Federal Poverty Guidelines](https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines)
* [Pennsylvania TANF Youth Development Program Summer and Year-Round Policy and Procedures Manual](https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Documents/Current-Directives/TANF%20YDP%20MANUAL.pdf) (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)

**Definition of Key Terms**

“Basic Skills Deficient” meet one or more of the characteristics listed below:

* A youth with English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test
* A youth or adult who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society

“Homeless Individual” or “Homeless Children and Youths” means an individual who meets any of the following criteria:

* Lacks a fixed regular, and adequate nighttime residence; this includes a participant who:
	+ Is sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
	+ Is living in a motel, hotel, trailer park, or campground due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
	+ Is living in an emergency or transitional shelter;
	+ Is abandoned in a hospital; or
	+ Is awaiting foster care placement;
* Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, such as a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
* Is a migratory child who in the preceding 36 months was required to move from one school district to another due to changes in the parent’s or parent’s spouse’s seasonal employment in agriculture, dairy, or fishing work; or
* Is under 18 years of age and absents himself or herself from home or place of legal residence without the permission of his or her family (i.e. runaway youth)

*(Note- A participant imprisoned or detained under an Act of Congress or State law does not meet the definition. Additionally, a participant who may be sleeping in a temporary accommodation while away from home should not, as a result of that alone, be recorded as homeless.)*

“Low-income individuals” meet one or more of the characteristics listed below:

* Recipient of Cash Public Assistance.
* Family Income that does not exceed the higher of 70% of the Lower Living Standard Income Level
* (LLSIL) or the poverty line
* Receives Food Stamps or was determined eligible to receive in the last six months
* Homeless
* Publicly supported Foster Child
* Individual with a disability and own income at or below 70% of the LLSIL or the poverty line
* Receives or is eligible to receive a free or reduced price school lunch
* An individual who resides in a high poverty area, defined as an area that has a poverty rate of at least 30% (set every 5 years, using ACS 5 year estimates)
* **TANF Only:** TANF Youth participants may meet income eligibility requirements if their personal monthly gross earned income is at or less than 235% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (see below).

“An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment” is defined by Partner4Work as a youth who meets one or more of the following criteria:

* Has an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
* Has a letter from a guidance counselor asserting their need of additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment
* Is currently credit deficient (i.e., one or more grade levels behind peer group)
* Has a poor work history (been fired from 1 or more jobs within the last six months OR has a history of sporadic employment, such as “has held 3 or more jobs within the last 12 months, and is no longer employed”)
* Has actively been seeking employment for at least 2 months, but remains unemployed or underemployed. This includes a youth with no employment history, with limited work experience, and/or actively seeking full-time employment, but have only achieved part-time employment
* Has incarcerated parent(s)

“Not attending any school” means a youth not receiving services from a public school, charter school, cyber charter school, career and technical school, sectarian school, or private school. Individuals who are enrolled in adult basic education/GED preparation, skills training, or other remedial education programs, including YouthBuild and Job Corps are not attending any school for the purposes of this policy.

“Self-attestation” occurs when an individual states his or her status for a particular data element, such as “runaway youth”, and then signs and dates a form acknowledging this status. Self-attestation is the process of: a) the individual identifying their status for permitted elements; and b) the individual signing and dating a form attesting to this self-identification.

“Self-certification” is the individual’s signed attestation that the information said individual submitted to demonstrate eligibility for a program under title I of WIOA is true and accurate. A signed self-certification form (see Appendix A) is a type of self-certification.

**Eligibility Requirements**

WIOA Youth Eligibility Requirements

Youth must meet basic eligibility requirements to participate in the WIOA Youth program. Both In-School Youth (ISY) and Out-of-School Youth (OSY) must meet the following eligibility requirements:

* Be a citizen or noncitizen authorized to work in the U.S.; and
* Meet selective service registration requirements (males only if applicable) (see below).

Additional eligibility requirements for ISY include:

* An individual who is between 14 and 21 years of age;
* An individual who is attending school, including secondary and post-secondary school (as defined by
* State law);
* A low income individual; and
* One or more of the following:
	+ Basic skills deficient;
	+ An English language learner;
	+ An offender;
	+ A homeless individual;
	+ Pregnant or parenting;
	+ A youth who is an individual with a disability;
	+ An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment (see *Definition of Key Terms* section). No more than **five (5) percent** of ISY served by Partner4Work in a program year may be deemed eligible based on this criterion.

Additional eligibility requirements for OSY include:

* An individual who is not attending any school (including secondary or postsecondary);
* An individual between the ages of 16 and 24 years of age; and
* One or more of the following:
	+ A school dropout;
	+ A youth who is within the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter;
	+ A recipient of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent who is a low-income individual and is—
		- Basic skills deficient; or
		- An English language learner
	+ An individual who is subject to the juvenile or adult justice system;
	+ A homeless individual, a runaway, an individual in foster care, or an individual who has aged out of the foster care system;
	+ An individual who is pregnant or parenting;
	+ A youth who is an individual with a disability;
	+ A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment (See *Definition of Key Terms* section).

An eligible ISY or OSY individual who has their high school diploma or GED and are basic skills deficient or an

English language learner must also meet low-income definition (WIOA Section 3, 36). Up to **five (5) percent** of youth registered may be classified as not low income but meet the other eligibility requirements. Requests to enroll youth who are not low income must be approved by Partner4Work.

TANF Youth Eligibility Requirements

Youth must meet basic eligibility requirements to participate in the TANF Youth program. Both ISY and OSY must meet the following eligibility requirements:

* Be between the ages of 12 (or having completed the 5th grade) and 24 years;
* Have her/his identity verified through SSN;
* Be a resident of Allegheny County and/or the City of Pittsburgh;
* Be a U.S. citizen or a TANF-eligible non-citizen;
* Meet selective service registration requirements (males only if applicable) (see below); and
* Have a personal monthly gross earned income that does not exceed 235% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIG);
	+ Note: The youth’s sole monthly gross earned income shall establish their qualification unless the youth is legally married or has children and is residing in the same home as the child(ren)’s other parent. In those instances, the youth and their spouse or the other parent of the child(ren)’s gross earned income will apply, and the family’s household size will include the youth, spouse or other parent of common child(ren) residing with them, and the child(ren). Proof of income must be dated **within the last 30 days**. Personal monthly gross income verification is required only at the time of enrollment.
* Individuals who have a personal monthly gross earned income that exceeds 235% of the FPIG may meet income eligibility requirements if they are a resident of a designated high poverty area[[1]](#footnote-1) and have any one of the documented additional barriers listed below. This method may only be used for individuals earning above 235% of the FPIG.

*For ISY:*

* + Basic skills deficient.
	+ English language learner.
	+ An offender, or a child of an incarcerated parent(s).
	+ Homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system.
	+ Pregnant or parenting.
	+ An individual with a disability.
	+ Person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.
	+ Identified as at risk of dropping out of school.
	+ Are a migrant.

*For OSY:*

* + A school dropout.
	+ Within age of compulsory attendance, but has not attended for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter.
	+ Holds a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent and is basic skills deficient or an English language learner.
	+ Subject to the juvenile or adult justice system, or a child of an incarcerated parent(s).
	+ Homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system, eligible for assistance under Section 477, Social Security Act, or in out-of-home placement.
	+ Pregnant or parenting.
	+ An individual with a disability.
	+ Requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.
	+ Are a migrant.

**Additional TANF Eligibility Information:**

* TANF in-school youth must be attending an accredited secondary school. TANF out-of-school youth must not be currently enrolled in secondary school.
* A person is **not** eligible for TANF if they are an inmate or resident of a public penal, reform, correctional or mental institution, or any other public institution or temporary hospitalized in a public mental institution. A court-involved youth may participate in the TANF Youth programming so long as they reside in a maternity home, drug and alcohol rehabilitation center, detoxification unit, community residential facilities under contract to, or operated by, state, county, or municipal authorities, such as Community Correction Centers (CCCs). TANF YDF providers should refer to the [Pennsylvania TANF Youth Development Program Summer and Year-Round Policy and Procedures Manual](https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Documents/Current-Directives/TANF%20YDP%20MANUAL.pdf) (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023) for additional information on how to determine TANF eligibility if institutionalized.
* For all group activities, TANF Youth providers must collect the required documentation to verify that each group activity participant is qualified to receive TANF Youth services before a given activity. For verified individuals qualified as TANF participants, participation begins on the date the youth applied and will remain qualified for **12 months**. During this time, the youth may participate in multiple services with different local providers.
* **Note**: If a TANF Youth provider chooses to serve individuals before establishing them as a qualified participant, the provider accepts the responsibility for funding services to those determined to be non-TANF eligible with an alternative funding source.

Partner4Work reserves the right to set additional eligibility requirements on an individual contractual basis. Subrecipients should refer to their contract with Partner4Work for the full scope of eligibility requirements for their program.

**Primary Eligibility Review**

WIOA Youth staff must verify participant eligibility prior to the provision of services. It is the WIOA Youth subrecipient’s responsibility to review and sign off on all registration paperwork for completeness and accuracy. The subrecipient must maintain a centrally controlled file for each program applicant and registrant which contains copies of all documents collected. The subrecipient will provide Federal, State, and Partner4Work monitors with access to such records given reasonable notice. The following differences between verification and documentation should be noted:

* **Verification** means to confirm eligibility requirements through examination of documents (e.g., birth certificates or public assistance records) or speaking with representatives of authorized agencies.
* **Documentation** means to maintain physical evidence, which is obtained during the verification process, in participant files. Examples of such evidence are copies of documents (where legally permitted).

The Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS) is the system of record for WIOA participant data. Appropriate data for WIOA ISY/OSY participants will be entered into CWDS by subrecipient staff for tracking participants’ registration and eligibility.

**Self-Certification**

WIOA Youth

Self-certification is allowed as a viable source for documenting certain eligibility criteria for WIOA Youth program participants. For ISY, the use of self-certification must be limited and only available as a last resort after all other sources of eligibility verification/documentation are exhausted. To ease burdens on both applicants and providers and serve out-of-school youth who are most in need, the use of self-certification is permitted for OSY eligibility determination and is **not required** to be limited or used as a last resort.

*Rare Circumstances*

Self-certification may be used to verify eligibility items requiring documentation that, in rare cases, may cause undue hardship for applicants to obtain, particularly those with barriers to employment. Additionally, self-certification may be accepted from an individual who has experienced a loss of documentation due to:

* Natural or man-made disaster such as fire, flood, or tornado;
* Eviction from residence resulting in a loss of supporting documentation; or
* Individual is fleeing or has fled an abusive or untenable home situation.

*Acceptable Eligibility Criteria*

Self-certification may only be used for WIOA OSY and ISY participants for documenting the eligibility criteria listed below. Self-certification is not an allowable documentation source for any eligibility criteria other than the criteria listed below. All other applicable requirements of this policy, including limited use of self-certification for ISY, must also be met.

* English language learner
* Homeless
* In/Aged out of the foster care system
* Offender
* Pregnant or parenting
* Requires additional assistance
* Runaway
* School status at time of registration

*Prohibited Use*

Self-certification, including the WIOA Statement of Family Size/Family Income Form, must **not** be used for determining household size and/or income eligibility for WIOA services. The WIOA Statement of Family Size/Family Income Form may be used for documenting income when not needed for determining eligibility.

*Telephone Verification*

Providers are encouraged to utilize telephone verification prior to self-certification where possible. Telephone verification involves verification of eligibility criteria through phone calls with recognized governmental or social services agencies. Information obtained through this method should be documented on the **attached** Telephone/Document Inspection Verification Form.

*CWDS Case Note Requirements*

Self-certification is among the least preferred methods of documenting and verifying eligibility for WIOA Youth participants. If self-certification is used for determining WIOA Youth eligibility, a rationale must be provided via case notes in CWDS that also describes all attempts at verifying eligibility prior to the use of self-certification. While self-certification is not required to be limited or used as a last resort for OSY eligibility determination, service providers should still provide a case note describing the reasoning/need for using self-certification for an OSY participant.

TANF YDF

TANF YDF participants may self-certify if they do not have earned income. The WIOA Self-Certification or Statement of Family Size/Income Form may be used for this purpose. For individuals with earned income, self-certification must only be used as a last resort for verifying income and attempts to collect verification must be documented in client case notes. Where an additional documented barrier is required for TANF YDF eligibility, self-certification may be used when other forms of verification are unavailable.

TANF YDF providers may also use telephone-verification, especially in consideration of individuals with barriers. When applicable, eligibility criteria may be verified by telephone contacts with recognized governmental or social services agencies, or by document inspections. Information obtained through this method should be documented on the **attached** Telephone/Document Inspection Verification Form.

Random Sampling Methodology

In order to verify applicant self-certification usage and to monitor self-attestations, Partner4Work will adopt a random sampling methodology. The methodology will verify eligibility in self-attested applications and will be implemented for all Title I programs.

Based on previous experience, Partner4Work estimates that less than 1% of participants report incorrect information when self-attesting on application forms. For the purposes of ensuring the validity of self-attested data, Partner4Work will use a 90% confidence interval and 5% margin of error. A random sample of the population utilizing self-attestation will be selected to verify if the information those individuals reported is correct. The size of the sample depends on the size of the population and is outlined in the table below. Population will be measured by funding stream (e.g. all OSY) and not by individual provider. Participants selected through the random sampling methodology will be notified at the time of monitoring and required to provide additional eligibility documentation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Population Size** | **Random Sample Size** |
| 25 | 8 |
| 50 | 9 |
| 75 | 9 |
| 100 | 10 |
| 200 | 10 |
| 300 | 10 |
| 400 | 10 |
| 500 | 14 |
| 750 | 20 |
| 1000 | 26 |

If more than 10% of examined participants are found to be ineligible, Partner4Work will take corrective action, including providing technical assistance to providers utilizing self-certification as a form of eligibility.

**Selective Service Requirements**

Every male citizen and male permanent resident non-citizen in the United States between the ages of 18 and 26 are required to register with Selective Service. Males who failed to register with Selective Service by their 26th birthday and can provide written explanation and supporting documentation of any of the following may be eligible for WIOA services:

* Over the age of 26 and were willing but unknowing of the requirement to register with Selective Service;
* Incarceration, institutionalization, or hospitalization between the ages of 18-26; or
* Non-citizen status and non-permanent resident status before age 26.

Partner4Work will monitor Selective Service exceptions to ensure that proper procedures are followed.

**Effective Date: July 1, 2022**

Policy Updates:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Summary of Updates** |
| 04/07/2020 | Added clarifying language that the Statement of Family Size/Income cannot be used for eligibility determination. |
| 06/15/2020 | Added language stating that individuals may only use the high poverty area method for eligibility if their personal monthly gross income is above 235% of the FPIG, as required by the Pennsylvania TANF YDF Manual.  |
| 06/15/2020 | Added clarifying language on the use of self-certification for eligibility purposes.  |
| 7/1/2021 | Created “Additional TANF Eligibility Information” section aligned with TANF YDF manual requirements. Added FPIG table as an attachment. Added clarification on the use of telephone verification for TANF eligibility purposes.  |
| 04/01/2022 | * Added definition of “Homeless Individual” or “Homeless Children and Youths”
* Added language clarifying the difference between self-attestation and self-certification.
* Added language describing differences between eligibility “verification” and “documentation”.
* Updated “Self-Certification” section to improve alignment with PA Department of Labor & Industry’s WORKFORCE SYSTEM GUIDANCE No. 04-2015 (Change 1), September 11, 2017. Changes include:
	+ Added language further clarifying the allowability of self-certification for out-of-school youth (OSY).
	+ Added section on “Rare Circumstances” in which self-certification may be used for youth eligibility determination.
	+ Reformatting to create individual sections for “Acceptable Eligibility Criteria”, “Prohibited Use”, “CWDS Case Note Requirements”, and “Telephone Verification”.
* Updated Federal Poverty Guidelines table with 2022 numbers.
* Additional mechanical editing and formatting.
 |
| 07/01/2022 | * Updated TANF Youth income eligibility requirements, specifically language regarding how personal gross monthly incomes is to be determined, to align with changes within the [Pennsylvania TANF Youth Development Program Summer and Year-Round Policy and Procedures Manual](https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Documents/Current-Directives/TANF%20YDP%20MANUAL.pdf) (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)
 |

**Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (2022)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Household Size** | **Federal Poverty Guideline (FPIG)** | **235% of FPIG** | **235% of FPIG (Hourly Wage)** |
| 1 | $13,590 | $31,937 | $15.35 |
| 2 | $18,310 | $43,029 | $20.69 |
| 3 | $23,030 | $54,121 | $26.02 |
| 4 | $27,750 | $65,213 | $31.35 |
| 5 | $32,470 | $76,305 | $36.68 |
| 6 | $37,190 | $87,397 | $42.02 |
| 7 | $41,910 | $98,489 | $47.35 |
| 8 | $46,630 | $109,581 | $52.68 |

1. The most current version of the Pennsylvania High Poverty Area Verification tool, distributed by L&I’s Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO), will be used to determine if a youth resides in a high poverty area. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)