

Department of Social and Health Services
Olympia, Washington
EAZ Manual

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Category Categorical Eligibility for Basic Food
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Summary

Updated clarifying information for WAC 388-414-0001 to reflect the current 200 percent of Federal Poverty (FPL) based on [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#). Also made minor cosmetic changes (e.g., correcting numbers and spacing).

Updated April 1, 2025

See below for edited text:

Categorical Eligibility for Basic Food

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Purpose:

This section explains which Basic Food assistance units (AUs) ~~do not~~don't have to meet all of the eligibility requirements for Basic Food.

[WAC 388-414-0001](#) Do I have to meet all eligibility requirements for Basic Food?

- [Clarifying Information](#)

Clarifying Information - [WAC 388-414-0001](#)

200 percent of Federal Poverty (FPL) based on Federal Poverty Guidelines published January 20242025. April 1, 20242025 – March 31, 20252026			
Persons in AU	200 percent FPL	Persons in AU	200 percent FPL
1	\$ 2,510 2,608	6	\$ 6,993 7,192
2	\$ 3,407 3,525	7	\$ 7,890 8,108
3	\$ 4,303 4,442	8	\$ 8,787 9,025
4	\$ 5,200 5,358	9	\$ 9,683 9,942
5	\$ 6,097 6,275	10	\$ 10,580 10,858
Add \$ 897 917 for each person over 10 AU members.			

NOTE: Categorical Eligibility (CE) eliminates resource requirements, the gross income test, and net income test for AUs with countable income up to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. If an AU has income up to this limit, we don't need to look at income limits or resources for Basic Food **unless** the AU can't be CE because:

- A member of the AU is disqualified from Basic Food for an Intentional Program Violation (IPV);
- The AU is disqualified from Basic Food for a substantial lottery or gambling win equal to or over the amount in [WAC 388-470-0005\(8\)\(a\)](#); or
- The Head of Household is disqualified for not meeting Basic Food work requirements.

NOTE: As stated in [WAC 388-412-0015](#), if the monthly benefits of a one or two-person assistance unit are less than the minimum benefit because we are prorating the benefits for the month of application, the AU **won't** receive the minimum benefit for this initial month.

An AU that is CE doesn't automatically receive Basic Food benefits. If the AU is ineligible for a reason other than income or resources, CE status doesn't make them eligible for benefits. Examples of eligibility requirements not met by CE include:

1. CE doesn't meet all eligibility requirements for Basic Food if the:

- a. AU is ineligible based on Striker requirements under [WAC 388-480-0001](#);
- b. AU is disqualified for transferring countable resources based on Transfer of Property requirements under [WAC 388-488-0010](#);
- c. AU is disqualified for a substantial lottery or gambling win equal to or over the amount in [WAC 388-470-0005\(8\)\(a\)](#).
- d. A member of the AU is disqualified from Basic Food for an Intentional Program Violation (IPV); or
- e. The Head of Household is disqualified for not meeting Basic Food work requirements.

2. CE based on gross countable income:

- a. AUs with countable income up to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible to use the department's [Washington Connection](#) website. This website provides information about our programs as well as referrals to resources in the community.
- b. This web-based information and referral service is partly funded with TANF and TANF Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds. Because of this funding, we are able to use this service to make AUs categorically eligible for Basic Food if they have countable income at or under 200%.
- c. The department notifies clients of the ability to access this website and its referral services through a text block on their approval letter for Basic Food.

3. Reporting requirements for CE households:

Households must report when:

- a. Their gross monthly income is more than 130% of federal poverty based on the number of people in the household when the household was last certified / recertified;
- b. A member of the household has a lottery or gambling win equal to or over the amount in [WAC 388-470-0005\(8\)\(a\)](#); or

- c. When a member of the household who must meet work requirements under [WAC 388-444-0030](#) has their hours at work go below twenty hours per week.
4. **CE based on receiving other benefits from other department programs:**
 - a. Households may still be CE if **everyone** in the assistance unit receives TANF/SFA, Tribal TANF, or if **all** Basic Food AU members receive Aged, Blind, Disabled (ABD) or Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) referral, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or a combination of the three. Additionally, receiving Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA) makes a household CE for the month the AU receives the payment and the following three months.
 - b. A household disqualified due to a lottery or gambling win remains ineligible for CE regardless of the other programs all members receive upon reapplication.
5. **CE and minimum monthly benefit for one and two-person households:**

All eligible one and two-person assistance units will receive at least the minimum monthly benefit as described under [WAC 388-412-0015](#). This includes one and two-person AUs with income up to 200% of the poverty guidelines whose monthly benefits would calculate to zero.
6. **Residency:**

Households that are CE have residency requirements deemed if residency verification is available from another program (TANF, SSI, ABD cash, etc.). This doesn't mean that if a household moves out of the state that it will continue to be eligible for Washington Basic Food benefits.
7. **Social Security Numbers and Sponsored Alien Information:**
 - a. CE households aren't generally required to provide Social Security Numbers (SSN) or sponsored alien information. However, we must verify information necessary for the benefit determination if it isn't captured in another program.
 - b. If the household is CE based on gross income only, and:
 - o the information isn't otherwise available; we will need to obtain the SSN.
 - o If we haven't previously verified the sponsored alien information; we must obtain the information if required under [WAC 388-450-0155](#).
8. **How to treat the Resources of an ineligible member of a CE Assistance Unit:**

If an AU is CE for Basic Food, but a member is ineligible for benefits, the resources of the ineligible member doesn't affect the AU's eligibility for Basic Food.

9. **How to treat the income of an ineligible member of a CE Assistance Unit:**

To determine if the AU is CE based on having income at or under 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, we count a portion of the ineligible member's income to the AU as required under [WAC 388-450-0140](#). We then compare the AU's gross income to the 200% standard based on the number of **eligible AU** members to determine if the AU is categorically eligible.

EXAMPLE: Basic Food AU consists of four eligible members and one member who is ineligible based on their undocumented status. The AU isn't CE based on receipt of TANF/SFA, DCA, SSI, or ABD benefits. The three eligible members of the AU have \$4000 monthly earnings; the fourth is a child. The ineligible member has \$1000 countable monthly income. Determine if the AU is CE as follows:

\$750 Prorated share ($\frac{3}{4}$ of \$1,000) of countable income from ineligible member under [WAC 388-450-0140](#)

+ \$4000 Gross countable income of eligible AU members

= **\$4,750** Income used to determine if AU meets 200% test.

Because the gross countable income of \$4,750 isn't over 200% of the federal poverty guidelines for three **eligible AU members**, the AU is CE for Basic Food.