

U.S. Department of Health &amp; Human Services

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION

## POVERTY GUIDELINES

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### *U.S. FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES USED TO DETERMINE FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN FEDERAL PROGRAMS*

There are two slightly different versions of the federal poverty measure: poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines.

The **poverty thresholds** are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the **Census Bureau**. The thresholds are used mainly for **statistical** purposes — for instance, preparing estimates of the number of Americans in poverty each year. (In other words, all official poverty population figures are calculated using the poverty thresholds, not the guidelines.) Poverty thresholds since 1973 (and for selected earlier years) and weighted average poverty thresholds since 1959 are available on the Census Bureau's Web site. For an example of how the Census Bureau applies the thresholds to a family's income to determine its poverty status, see "How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty" on the Census Bureau's web site.

The **poverty guidelines** are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the Federal Register by the **Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS). The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for **administrative** purposes — for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs.

The poverty guidelines are sometimes loosely referred to as the "federal poverty level" (FPL), but that phrase is ambiguous and should be avoided, especially in situations (e.g., legislative or administrative) where precision is important.

Key differences between poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines are outlined in a table under Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). See also the discussion of this topic on the Institute for Research on Poverty's web site.

The January 2017 poverty guidelines are calculated by taking the 2015 Census Bureau's poverty thresholds and adjusting them for price changes between 2015 and 2016 using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The poverty thresholds used by the Census Bureau for statistical purposes are complex and are not composed of standardized increments between family sizes. Since many program officials prefer to use guidelines with uniform increments across family sizes, the poverty guidelines include rounding and standardizing adjustments in the formula.

## HHS POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR 2017

The 2017 poverty guidelines are in effect as of January 26, 2017.

See also the Federal Register notice of the 2017 poverty guidelines, published January 31, 2017

### 2017 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

#### PERSONS IN FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD

#### POVERTY GUIDELINE

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,180 for each additional person.

1	\$12,060
2	\$16,240
3	\$20,420
4	\$24,600
5	\$28,780
6	\$32,960
7	\$37,140
8	\$41,320

### 2017 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR ALASKA

#### PERSONS IN FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD

#### POVERTY GUIDELINE

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$5,230 for each additional person.

1	\$15,060
2	\$20,290
3	\$25,520
4	\$30,750
5	\$35,980
6	\$41,210
7	\$46,440

8	\$51,670
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## 2017 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR HAWAII

### PERSONS IN FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD

### POVERTY GUIDELINE

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,810 for each additional person.

1	\$13,860
2	\$18,670
3	\$23,480
4	\$28,290
5	\$33,100
6	\$37,910
7	\$42,720
8	\$47,530

The separate poverty guidelines for Alaska and Hawaii reflect Office of Economic Opportunity administrative practice beginning in the 1966-1970 period. Note that the poverty thresholds — the original version of the poverty measure — have never had separate figures for Alaska and Hawaii. The poverty guidelines are not defined for Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Palau. In cases in which a Federal program using the poverty guidelines serves any of those jurisdictions, the Federal office which administers the program is responsible for deciding whether to use the contiguous-states-and-D.C. guidelines for those jurisdictions or to follow some other procedure.

The poverty guidelines apply to both aged and non-aged units. The guidelines have never had an aged/non-aged distinction; only the Census Bureau (statistical) poverty thresholds have separate figures for aged and non-aged one-person and two-person units.

Programs using the guidelines (or percentage multiples of the guidelines — for instance, 125 percent or 185 percent of the guidelines) in determining eligibility include Head Start, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the National School Lunch Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Note that in general, cash public assistance programs (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families