

Policy to Establish the Definition of a Youth Living in a High-Poverty Area

I. INTRODUCTION

For a youth to be eligible to participate in the Youth Program, they must be an in-school or out-of-school youth. However, another equally important eligibility criterion is their economic or income level, particularly for in-school youth. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is designed to support the occupational success of both in-school and out-of-school youth; therefore, determining eligibility based on family income or individual income is essential, where applicable according to their area of residence.

II. LEGAL BASIS

- Section 129(a)(2) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Section 681.260 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Regulations.
- "Training and Employment Guidance Letter 21-16" issued by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor on March 2, 2017 (TEGL 21-16).

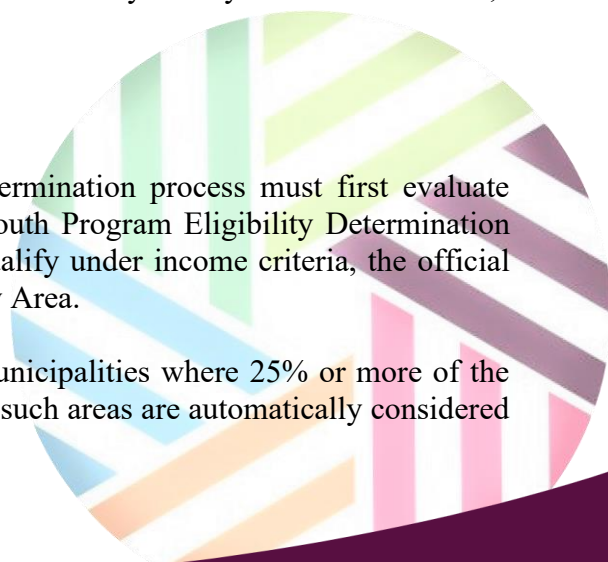
III. DEFINITION – YOUTH LIVING IN A HIGH-POVERTY AREA

In addition to the low-income criterion, WIOA includes language that allows for the qualification of youth living in high-poverty areas. Section 681.260 of the Interpretive Regulations establishes that a high-poverty area is a census tract, an Indian reservation, or other specific geographic and population areas—including counties, which in the case of Puerto Rico refers to Municipalities—that have a poverty rate of 25% or higher. This rate is established by the "American Community Survey – 5-Year Estimates," published by the United States Census Bureau.

IV. DETERMINATION OF A HIGH-POVERTY AREA

The official designated to complete the youth eligibility determination process must first evaluate whether the applicant meets low-income criteria under the Youth Program Eligibility Determination Policy approved by the Local Board. If the youth does not qualify under income criteria, the official proceeds to determine if the applicant resides in a High-Poverty Area.

A High-Poverty Area, in the case of Puerto Rico, refers to Municipalities where 25% or more of the population lives below the poverty line. Individuals residing in such areas are automatically considered low-income youth.



Attachment II of TEGL 21-16 outlines the step-by-step process for officials to identify whether a youth's residence qualifies as a High-Poverty Area. This process involves looking up the poverty rate by Municipality via the U.S. Census website and making a determination based on data provided by the "American Community Survey – 5-Year Estimates." If the youth's Municipality of residence has a poverty rate below 25%, Attachment II of TEGL 21-16 also provides instructions to verify eligibility using the applicant's specific residential address.

Designated officials must keep in mind that economic income criteria are not the sole factor in the qualification process. This policy is adopted exclusively to define High-Poverty Areas and its impact on the eligibility determination process.

V. HIGH-POVERTY AREAS

The poverty rates for the municipalities within the Local Area are as follows:

MUNICIPALITY % POVERTY LEVEL

Las Marías 58.0%

Mayagüez 51.1%

VI. OBLIGATION TO UPDATE DATA

The Executive Director shall be obligated to update the statistical data included in this policy, as it reflects the information available through the Census Bureau at the time of approval.



VII. APPROVAL AND EFFECTIVE DATE

This public policy shall take effect immediately upon its approval. The Executive Director shall be responsible for informing staff within five (5) days following its approval.


JOSÉ A. JUSTINIANO RODRÍGUEZ
Chair, Local Workforce Development Board

June 20th, 2024
DATE

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