



### **THE 2008 HHS POVERTY GUIDELINES**

One Version of the [U.S.] Federal Poverty Measure

- [ *Federal Register* Notice with 2008 Guidelines – Full Text  
[ <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08fedreg.htm> ]
- [ Computations for the 2008 Poverty Guidelines ]  
[<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08computations.shtml> ]

There are two slightly different versions of the federal poverty measure:

- The poverty thresholds, and
- The poverty guidelines.

The poverty thresholds are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the Census Bureau (although they were originally developed by Mollie Orshansky of the Social Security Administration). 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 1980 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 full text of the *Federal Register* notice with the 2008 poverty guidelines is available.)

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) (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/faq.shtml#differences>).

See also the discussion of this topic on the Institute for Research on Poverty’s web site (<http://www.irlp.wisc.edu/faqs/faq1.htm>).

**2008 HHS Poverty Guidelines**

<b>Persons in Family or Household</b>	<b>48 Contiguous States and D.C.</b>	<b>Alaska</b>	<b>Hawaii</b>
1	\$10,400	\$13,000	\$11,960
2	14,000	17,500	16,100
3	17,600	22,000	20,240
4	21,200	26,500	24,380
5	24,800	31,000	28,520
6	28,400	35,500	32,660
7	32,000	40,000	36,800
8	35,600	44,500	40,940
For each additional person, add	3,600	4,500	4,140

**SOURCE:** *Federal Register*, Vol. 73, No. 15, January 23, 2008, pp. 3971–3972

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 Food Stamp Program, 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 and Supplemental Security Income) do NOT use the poverty guidelines in determining eligibility. The Earned Income Tax Credit program also does NOT use the poverty guidelines to determine eligibility. For a more detailed list of programs that do and don’t use the guidelines, see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

The poverty guidelines (unlike the poverty thresholds) are designated by the year in which they are issued. For instance, the guidelines issued in January 2008 are designated the 2008 poverty guidelines. However, the 2008 HHS poverty guidelines only reflect price changes through calendar year 2007; accordingly, they are approximately equal to the Census Bureau poverty thresholds for calendar year 2007. (The 2007 thresholds are expected to be issued in final form in August 2008; a preliminary version of the 2007 thresholds is now available from the Census Bureau.)

The computations for the 2008 poverty guidelines are available.  
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08computations.shtml>

The poverty guidelines may be formally referenced as “the poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2).”

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<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08fedreg.htm>

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From the Federal Register Online via GPO Access [[wais.access.gpo.gov](http://wais.access.gpo.gov)]  
[DOCID:fr23ja08-48]

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines

AGENCY: Department of Health and Human Services.

ACTION: Notice.  
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SUMMARY: This notice provides an update of the HHS poverty guidelines to account for last calendar year's increase in prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index.

DATES: Effective Date: Date of publication, unless an office administering a program using the guidelines specifies a different effective date for that particular program.

ADDRESSES: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Room 404E, Humphrey Building, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Washington, DC 20201.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information about how the guidelines are used or how income is defined in a particular program, contact the Federal, State, or local office that is responsible for that program. Contact information for two frequently requested programs is given below:

For information about the Hill-Burton Uncompensated Services

Program (free or reduced-fee health care services at certain hospitals and other facilities for persons meeting eligibility criteria involving the poverty guidelines), contact the Office of the Director, Division of Facilities Compliance and Recovery, Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS, Room 10-105, Parklawn Building, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857. To speak to a person, call (301) 443-5656. To receive a Hill-Burton information package, call 1-800-638-0742 (for callers outside Maryland) or 1-800-492-0359 (for callers in Maryland). You also may visit <http://www.hrsa.gov/hillburton/default.htm>. The Division of Facilities Compliance and Recovery notes that as set by 42 CFR 124.505(b), the effective date of this update of the poverty guidelines for facilities obligated under the Hill-Burton Uncompensated Services Program is sixty days from the date of this publication.

For information about the percentage multiple of the poverty guidelines to be used on immigration forms such as USCIS Form I-864, Affidavit of Support, contact U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at 1-800-375-5283 or visit <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-864p.pdf>.

For information about the number of people in poverty or about the Census Bureau poverty thresholds, visit the Poverty section of the Census Bureau's Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty.html> or contact the Census Bureau's Demographic Call Center Staff at (301) 763-2422 or 1-866-758-1060 (toll-free).

For general questions about the poverty guidelines themselves, contact Gordon Fisher, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Room 404E, Humphrey Building, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC 20201--telephone: (202) 690-7507--or visit <http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/>.

## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

### Background

Section 673(2) of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)) requires the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to update, at least annually, the poverty guidelines, which shall be used as an eligibility criterion for the Community Services Block Grant program. The poverty guidelines also are used as an eligibility criterion by a number of other Federal programs. The poverty guidelines issued here are a simplified version of the poverty thresholds that the Census Bureau uses to prepare its estimates of the number of individuals and families in poverty.

As required by law, this update is accomplished by increasing the latest published Census Bureau poverty thresholds by the relevant percentage change in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). The guidelines in this 2008 notice reflect the 2.8 percent price increase between calendar years 2006 and 2007. After this inflation adjustment, the guidelines are rounded and adjusted to standardize the differences between family sizes. The same calculation procedure was used this year as in previous years. (Note that these

2008 guidelines are roughly equal to the poverty thresholds for calendar year 2007 which the Census Bureau expects to publish in final form in August 2008.) The guideline figures shown represent annual income.

2008 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia

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Persons in family	Poverty guideline
1.....	\$10,400
2.....	14,000
3.....	17,600
4.....	21,200
5.....	24,800
6.....	28,400
7.....	32,000
8.....	35,600

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For families with more than 8 persons, add \$3,600 for each additional person.

2008 Poverty Guidelines for Alaska

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Persons in family	Poverty guideline
1.....	\$13,000
2.....	17,500
3.....	22,000
4.....	26,500
5.....	31,000
6.....	35,500
7.....	40,000
8.....	44,500

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For families with more than 8 persons, add \$4,500 for each additional person.

2008 Poverty Guidelines for Hawaii

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Persons in family	Poverty guideline
1.....	\$11,960
2.....	16,100
3.....	20,240
4.....	24,380
5.....	28,520
6.....	32,660
7.....	36,800
8.....	40,940

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For families with more than 8 persons, add \$4,140 for each additional person.

Separate poverty guideline figures for Alaska and Hawaii reflect Office of Economic Opportunity administrative practice beginning in the 1966-1970 period. (Note that the Census Bureau poverty thresholds--the version of the poverty measure used for statistical purposes--have never had separate figures for Alaska and Hawaii.) The poverty guidelines are not defined for Puerto Rico or other outlying jurisdictions. In cases in which a Federal program using the poverty guidelines serves any of those jurisdictions, the Federal office that administers the program is generally responsible for deciding whether to use the contiguous-states-and-DC guidelines for those jurisdictions or to follow some other procedure.

Due to confusing legislative language dating back to 1972, the poverty guidelines have sometimes been mistakenly referred to as the "OMB" (Office of Management and Budget) poverty guidelines or poverty line. In fact, OMB has never issued the guidelines; the guidelines are issued each year by the Department of Health and Human Services. The poverty guidelines may be formally referenced as "the poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2)."

Some programs use a percentage multiple of the guidelines (for example, 125 percent or 185 percent of the guidelines), as noted in relevant authorizing legislation or program regulations. Non-Federal organizations that use the poverty guidelines under their own authority in non-federally-funded activities can choose to use a percentage multiple of the guidelines such as 125 percent or 185 percent.

The poverty guidelines do not make a distinction between farm and non-farm families, or between aged and non-aged units. (Only the Census Bureau poverty thresholds have separate figures for aged and non-aged one-person and two-person units.)

Note that this notice does not provide definitions of such terms as "income" or "family." This is because there is considerable variation in how different programs that use the guidelines define these terms, traceable to the different laws and regulations that govern the various programs.

Therefore, questions about how a particular program applies the poverty guidelines (for example, Is income before or after taxes? Should a particular type of income be counted? Should a particular person be counted in the family or household unit?) should be directed to the organization that administers the program.

Dated: January 17, 2008.  
Michael O. Leavitt,  
Secretary of Health and Human Services.  
[FR Doc. 08-256 Filed 1-18-08; 9:13 am]

BILLING CODE 4151-05-M