ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Proof of Family Income Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1) What is the requirement for proof of family income?

Programs are required to collect and review proof of family income to determine eligibility and priority points for every student (see exceptions in question 8) enrolled in Preschool or All, Preschool for Al Expansion, and Prevention Initiative as a part of the screening process for eligibility into early childhood block grant programs upon entry to the program. Income does not need collected in subsequent years unless changing programs (i.e. moving from Preschool for All classroom to Preschool for All Expansion classroom). Proof of family income must be placed in each child's folder. During compliance monitoring visits, monitors will look for this documentation.

2) How is family income documented?

Programs must document how family income was calculated using any one of the following forms of evidence:

- Pay stubs (two most recent, consecutive)
- Proof of WIC benefit
- Proof of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit
- Proof of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) enrollment
- Proof of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit
- Proof the family receives Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)
- Tax return (most recent)
- Wages and tax statement (most recent W-2)
- Verification/letter from employer
- Proof that parent is enrolled in Medicaid (a medical card with the child's name does not prove income eligibility).
- Signed written statement from the family (provide form for families with no income). This is only an option when families have no income sources.

3) Can the benefit card be in the child's name?

No, the benefit card must be in the parent's name.

4) Can the direct certification list for food and nutrition programs from ISBE be used as verification of income?

Yes, the direct certification list for food and nutrition programs from ISBE can be used as verification of income. The copy of the list with the student's name highlighted should be placed in the student's PFA folder. The benefit that is listed that the child receives will make you aware of what FPL the child falls in (see chart in Question 10).

5) Why is this verification requirement in place?

Income has always been a component of screening for eligibility into programs, but now income must be verified for data collection and reporting purposes. This helps ensure the most at-risk children are being served.

6) I already have students enrolled in the program this year and am having a difficult time getting the verification. Should the student be unenrolled?

Income verification is required prior to enrolling the student. If income verification is not complete, the program will be out of compliance.

7) **What happens if families refuse to provide income verification documentation for new enrollments?**

Income verification must be collected for every child enrolled in the program (see exceptions in question 8). This should be a part of the enrollment process. If the family does not want to provide verification documents, the child cannot be enrolled in the program. The early childhood block grant program should provide information on other area programs parents can look to for services.

8) Do we collect income verification for a child experiencing homelessness, is a youth in care, is an undocumented immigrant, or is a child with an IEP?

The program cannot ask families within these categories for income documentation. A weighted eligibility form should still be completed. However, the lack of income verification should be noted on the eligibility form and the financial status of that family cannot be counted as an at-risk factor. **Please note children with Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) do require income verification.**

9) If no at-risk points are given to the child for income, is verification still required?

Income verification for all students enrolled in the program, with the exception of the scenarios above, is required, regardless of whether or not the family qualifies for at-risk points for income.

10) What income levels are associated with each public benefit?

Program Name	Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
WIC	185%
Medicaid Card	138%
SNAP	130%
TANF	50%
CCAP	200%

By using this chart, you do not need to have the specific income. Each benefit is associated with an FPL, which you can use to select the correct FPL within the student information system (SIS) early childhood enrollment record. A copy of the public benefit card needs to be placed in child's file.