

# Social Services Block Grant Eligibility

**Policy 14.01**

**Effective: October 15, 2023**

## Introduction

For individuals to be eligible for adult day services funded by the Social Services Block Grant, they must be referred by Adult Protective Services or be income-eligible, over the age of eighteen (18) and have a physical or mental impairment. Recipients of homemaker services must be victims of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation and be referred by Adult Protective Services. In all cases, recipients of services must be citizens of the United States or qualified non-citizens.

## Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide procedures and guidelines regarding eligibility for Social Services Block Grant homemaker, adult day services, and Specific Assistance. This document is designed to address who is eligible and how eligibility is determined.

## Policy

### A. Findings of Eligibility

In order for a citizen to be found eligible for services through a program funded by the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), the client must be a United States (US) citizen or qualified non-citizen and determined to be both financially eligible and in need of services.

### B. Adult Protective Services Clients and Eligibility

As an exception to the general findings of eligibility, Adult Protective Services (APS) clients do not need to prove financial eligibility or need for services. As protective clients, they receive services without regard to income (WRI), and APS determines eligibility and provides authorization for services.

### C. Service Priority for Adult Day Services

Adult day services provided using SSBG funds must give priority to APS protective client cases. Admissions policies must be written in a manner that reflects this priority.

### D. Income Eligible Homemaker Clients

1. Effective July 1, 2006, the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) restricted providers from accepting homemaker clients on an income-eligible (IE) basis. All IE homemaker clients whose services started prior to that date were permitted to continue services on that basis. All subsequent homemaker clients were to be referred to the providers solely by APS and purely on a WRI basis.
2. In order for the remaining IE homemaker clients to recertify, each must have a household income within 200% of the annual Federal Poverty Guidelines, as indicated in the [Adult Day Services Fee Schedule](#).

### E. Nursing Homes and Institutions

1. SSBG homemaker and adult day services are not available for residents of nursing homes and institutions.
2. However, when a provider has a client who enters a nursing home, transitional services may be provided as needed to ensure a smooth transition of casework from the provider to the nursing home. Transitional services must not exceed thirty (30) calendar days.
3. SSBG services are available to institutionalized homemaker clients who are referred, and adult day services clients who are either referred or meet eligibility requirements if the services will assist them to move out of institutionalized care and into the community. Services should be initiated only after the

institution has provided a written plan that shows the client will be moving back into the community. The plan must show the client returning to the community within thirty (30) calendar days.

#### F. Self-Declaration

SSBG benefits can be granted based on self-declaration regarding both income and citizenship/qualified non-citizen status while attempts are made to acquire appropriate documentation.

1. **Documentation:** Every attempt to acquire the missing paperwork should be documented in the file.
2. **Appropriate Use:** The self-declaration method of establishing eligibility can be used in all necessary cases unless monetary payments for services or tangible benefits are purchased with SSBG funds.

#### G. Need for Services

Unless a client is referred for services through APS, the household must meet income guidelines, and the need for services must be established. Establishing need requires careful review of the applicant's circumstances. Considerations may include, but are not limited to:

1. The applicant's stated reason for requesting the service
2. The conditions in the applicant's home
3. The physical and/or mental condition of the applicant
4. Whether or not other services and/or resources are available to the applicant, and whether or not they are being utilized
5. Do the physical/mental condition of the applicant, and the condition of his/her living environment support the stated reason for requesting services?
6. Does the need for services meet one or more of SSBG's service goals? (See [Social Services Block Grant Service Goals](#))

Applicants for adult day services must require supervision in a structured, protective environment for less than twenty-four (24) hours a day due to physical or mental impairments as evidenced by:

1. Clients aged eighteen (18) to fifty-nine (59)
  - severe and/or chronic mental or physical disability which is likely to continue indefinitely and has resulted in functional limitations in social and daily living skills.
2. Clients aged sixty (60) and older
  - residing with a relative or non-relative caretaker due to functional limitations in daily living skills and who require supervision for part of the day to allow the caretaker to be away from home; and/or
  - experiencing depression, confusion, withdrawal, chronic illness, deteriorating mobility, and/or deteriorating social and life skills such that there is a substantive diminishment in their ability to perform their own activities of daily living (ADLs) and are at a resultant risk of institutionalization.

IE homemaker clients must also establish the need for service when eligibility is redetermined at appropriate intervals. Their need is exemplified by the following:

1. A single adult or couple who lives alone, and because of temporary illness or infirmity is unable to manage some of their ADLs
2. An adult in a hospital, nursing home, or boarding house who can return to their home if some of the ADLs are done for them
3. An ill or infirm adult who is not receiving proper care or who is living in hazardous circumstances
4. An abused, neglected, or exploited adult who needs to be taught basic skills to care for themselves or their home

#### H. Service Goals

All SSBG services are intended to assist clients in meeting at least one (1) of five (5) national service goals.

- Goal 1: Achieving or maintaining economic self-support, including the reduction or prevention of dependency.
- Goal 2: Achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency including the reduction or prevention of dependency.
- Goal 3: Preventing or remedying neglect,

abuse, or exploitation of adults unable to protect their own interest or preserving, rehabilitating, or reuniting families.

- Goal 4: Preventing or reducing inappropriate institutional care by providing community based care, home based care, or other forms of less intensive care.
- Goal 5: Securing referral or admission for institutional care when other forms of care are not appropriate or providing services to individuals in institutions.

For further details on each service goal, see [Social Services Block Grant Service Goals](#).

### I. Application for Services

The files of all IE SSBG adult day services and homemaker clients must contain a signed [HS-3117 Application for Social Services Block Grant \(SSBG\) Services](#). For APS WRI cases, the providers will receive a referral through the case management system (CMS).

1. Every individual who wishes to receive SSBG services must have the opportunity to apply without delay. The application must be completed and eligibility established prior to the initiation of services.
2. All applicants must use the official [HS-3117 Application for Social Services Block Grant \(SSBG\) Services](#). All form instructions must be followed and all fields completed.
3. All applications must be processed within one (1) business day of the date the applicant signed the application. When eligibility is not determined within the required time frame, the record must clearly reflect the cause for delay.
4. The following must be included on, or attached to, the application in order to show compliance with all policies and procedures:
  - a. Evidence that the client is both financially eligible and in need of services
  - b. Verification of social security number(s) (SSN) for all members of the household
  - c. Copy of client notification regarding eligibility.
5. Notification of application approval or denial, as well as notification if eligibility cannot be

determined, must be provided in writing to all applicants within fifteen (15) calendar days of the date of the decision. See [SSBG Eligibility Procedures](#).

6. Eligibility may be denied should the applicant fail to provide all necessary information and/or documentation.

### J. Certification Period

Eligibility is determined in one (1) year increments unless circumstances that would affect eligibility change.

Eligibility dates cannot be backdated.

### K. APS Referral to Homemaker and Adult Day Services

1. For WRI cases, the initial need was determined by APS, as indicated by their referral to homemaker or adult day services. If a provider receives a referral they don't feel is appropriate, the agency must contact TDHS SSBG program staff and receive approval prior to declining the referral and/or denying service to the client.

If possible, APS will accompany provider staff on the provider's initial visit. This is intended to allow APS, with whom the client is familiar, to introduce the client to the agency providing services. This is not needed if the client has previously received SSBG services from the same provider agency.

2. Any time an APS case is closed after a referral has been made, APS must submit an [HS-0878 Termination of Services](#) (Internal Use Only) form to the provider.

### L. Redetermination

If a client's household size, income, or need for services changes during the certification period, or the provider has reason to believe that a change in circumstances that may affect eligibility has taken place, eligibility must be redetermined within fifteen (15) calendar days.

### M. Financial Penalties

Except in situations of self-declaration, all applications must be complete and eligibility must be documented prior to initiation of services. Provision of services to individuals for whom eligibility has not been determined and documented may result in financial penalties

assessed to the provider. Penalties will take the form of adjustments to the provider's monthly reimbursement. The following are examples of how providers might not adequately determine/document client eligibility:

1. Client eligibility is not current
2. Full household income is not documented
3. Verifications are not complete and/or do not establish the client's eligibility
4. Application is not signed and dated by the applicant or the applicant's representative
5. Eligibility determination section of the application is complete, but not signed and dated by the provider's employee determining eligibility
6. Client is over the income guidelines
7. Services are provided prior to verification for those clients not using self-declaration

#### N. Citizenship and Qualified Non-Citizen Status

Except in situations of self-declaration, citizenship or qualified non-citizen status must be determined prior to initiation of services. This step applies to both IE adult day services clients and WRI homemaker and adult day services clients. See [Determination of US Citizenship or Qualified Non-Citizen Status](#).

#### O. Income Requirements

Unless referred by APS, recipients of adult day services must be eligible on the basis of income. The income of the entire household must fall within the guidelines set by this policy. If an individual qualifies for services, the fee is fully subsidized or set on a sliding scale. See [Adult Day Services Fee Schedule](#).

The following are important to consider prior to determining financial eligibility:

1. Household Income – See Definitions/Acronyms section for more information.
2. Homelessness – When homeless individuals reside temporarily in another permanent household, the individual is considered a separate economic unit.
3. Inclusions and Exclusions of Income – See [Included and Excluded Income Sources with Verifications](#).

4. Zero Income – In circumstances where the individual's household has zero income, a combination of self-declaration and other methods of documentation are used and placed in the client's file. See [SSBG Eligibility Procedures](#).

#### Calculating Income

The provider must calculate income in a manner that best reflects the actual income for the household. Calculations are based on gross income.

1. All income must be averaged and converted to monthly amounts using the generally accepted accounting principles provided in the [SSBG Eligibility Procedures](#) document.
2. All income, including fixed income, must be verified and documented at the time of application and at each redetermination.

#### P. Adult Day Services Fees

1. Fees are charged based on gross household income and determined by the [Adult Day Services Fee Schedule](#).
2. Payment frequency and amount: Parties must enter a payment agreement that includes:
  - fee amount
  - charges not included in fees,
  - frequency,
  - due date, and
  - financially responsible party.

The agreement must be signed by both parties and any changes to the agreement require an updated plan.

3. Sponsorship: If a provider determines that the cost of fees represents a financial hardship for a client, the agency may arrange for sponsorship or pay the client's fees using unrestricted agency funds. If at any time a sponsorship by the provider or third party is terminated, suspended, or interrupted the client is responsible for timely payment.
4. Documentation: To demonstrate compliance, the provider must document the collection of day services fees and identify:
  - a. Client name

- b. Whether the client is a full or part-time recipient of services
  - c. Payment frequency
  - d. Date payment is due
  - e. Payment date
  - f. Whether payment is made
  - g. Payer (client, family member, sponsor, etc.)
  - h. The time period covered by the fee
5. Full time/part-time care:
- The [Adult Day Services Fee Schedule](#) is based on full-time care
    - i. For fee purposes, a client is considered full-time when they regularly receive at least twenty-four (24) hours of services per week.
    - ii. Part-time clients regularly attend less than twenty-four (24) hours per week and are to be charged one-half of the listed fee.
6. The client must pay the full weekly fee when they are absent due to illness or vacations. Fees must be prorated when the provider is closed for holidays, in-service training, etc.
7. If more than one member of the household attends adult day services at the same provider, then each member must pay the appropriate fee.
8. When the fee is not paid according to the agreed-upon schedule, the provider must:
- a. document non-payment
  - b. attempt to collect the debt
  - c. send or give written notice to the client at the end of the calendar month
  - d. establish a written plan for payment signed by the client within seven (7) calendar days after the month-end notification is sent/given, OR within seven (7) calendar days, send final notice of closure then close case as indicated if fees are not paid.
    - If the case is closed for non-payment, the client will not be eligible for adult day services again until the back fees

are paid or until their case has been closed for six (6) months.

9. Any deviation from this prescribed policy for fee collection must have prior written approval from the TDHS SSBG program director or their designee.

#### **Q. Continuity of Services for APS Clients**

The SSBG cases for clients who have not received services within thirty (30) calendar days must be closed. Closure notices must be sent to both the client and TDHS SSBG program staff. However, the provider has the discretion to reopen the case within ninety (90) calendar days of closure if the client continues to display a significant need. This would not require a new referral or authorization of services from APS, and the case would be reopened under the WRI category.

#### **R. Duplication of Services**

SSBG services should not duplicate those provided by other sources or agencies on the same day. APS may request exceptions to this policy by providing documentation.

#### **S. Conflict of Interest**

1. Pursuant to 2 CFR § 215.42 Codes of Conduct, agency staff may not provide services to family members, unless there are no other SSBG-funded caregivers in the area.
2. All agency staff must sign a conflict of interest statement to be kept in their personnel file.

#### **Supporting Documents**

[HS-3117 Application for Social Services Block Grant \(SSBG\) Services Instructions](#)

[HS-0878 Termination of Services Instructions](#) [Internal Use Only]

[HS-3109 SSBG Change in Circumstances Instructions](#)  
[Social Services Block Grant Service Goals](#)

[Determination of US Citizenship or Qualified Non-Citizen Status](#)

[Adult Day Services Fee Schedule](#)

[Included and Excluded Income Sources with Verifications](#)

[SSBG Eligibility Procedures](#)

[Federal SSBG Website](#)

[State SSBG Website](#)**Definitions/Acronyms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>ADLs</b>	Activities of Daily Living
<b>Adult Day Services</b>	Adult day care
<b>APS</b>	Adult Protective Services
<b>CMS</b>	Case Management System
<b>Current Income</b>	Income received within the three (3) months prior to the date the Social Services Block Grant application is signed.
<b>Fixed Income</b>	An income from a pension, investment, or benefit that is set at a particular figure and does not rise except perhaps annually in a cost-of-living adjustment.
<b>Household</b>	Any individual or group of individuals who reside together and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• file a single tax return or,</li> <li>• whose income is low enough that filing is not required.</li> </ul>
<b>Household Income</b>	The total gross income for all individuals in a household.
<b>IE</b>	Income Eligible
<b>Monetary payments</b>	Payments of cash in any form from Social Services Block Grant or its subcontracted agencies to Social Services Block Grant recipients for any purpose.
<b>Representative Income</b>	Income that represents the usual amount of income earned over an equivalent period of time.
<b>Self-declaration</b>	When a client states in writing and under signature that he or she is a United States citizen or qualified non-citizen and/or financially eligible for Social Services Block Grant funds, even though the client has no proof.
<b>SSBG</b>	Social Services Block Grant
<b>SSN</b>	Social Security Number
<b>Tangible Benefits</b>	Physical goods such as groceries, household items, personal care items, cleaning supplies, furniture, etc.
<b>TDHS</b>	Tennessee Department of Human Services

**Supersedes**


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**Approval History**

Approved By	Approver Title	Approved Date	Effective Date
Cheryl Campbell-Street	Deputy Commissioner	10/06/2023	10/15/2023
Clarence H. Carter	Commissioner	03/30/2023	04/01/2023
Clarence H. Carter	Commissioner	10/27/2022	11/01/2022
Danielle Barnes	Commissioner	09/25/2019	10/01/2019

**Revision History**

Date	Version	Location of Change	Description/Reason for Change
10/06/2023	10/15/2023	Policy Section and Supporting Documents	Fixed links throughout that were mistakenly linked to internal links instead of external links. Removed some obsolete forms and added any forms that might replace them.
03/30/2023	04/01/2023	Policy and Definition sections	Removed Depletion of Grant Funds section, adjusted the recertification timeline, increased the income eligibility limit, and clearly defined household.
11/01/2022	12/19/2022	Policy section	Better defined household, raised the income eligibility limit, removed Depletion of Grant Funds section, revamped recertification timing.
09/25/2019	10/01/2019	N/A	New Policy

<b>Approved By</b>	<i>Clarence H. Carter</i> 	<b>Approval Date</b>	10/06/2023
<b>Authority</b>	Title XX Block Grant to States for Social Services and Elder Justice 2 CFR § 215.42 Codes of Conduct	<b>Effective Date</b>	10/15/2023
<b>Application</b>	State Employees, Contract Staff, and Administrators		