

WIOA YOUTH ELIGIBILITY

Gateway Youth Programs are funded as either in-school or out-of-school youth programs. This section explains the eligibility requirements for each program. Every youth must have eligibility for the Gateway Program fully documented before receiving services. For more details regarding eligibility and documentation requirements please refer to The Mississippi Partnership Youth Eligibility & Data Validation Policy.

A. Eligibility for In-School Youth Programs

1. High School Students (targeting Juniors and Seniors who are interested in Career Tech fields in one of the target sectors); and
2. Low-Income as defined by WIOA Law; and
3. Have one or more of the following barriers:
 - a. Basic Skills Deficient
 - b. English Language Learner
 - c. Offender
 - d. Homeless or Runaway
 - e. Foster Child
 - f. Pregnant or Parenting
 - g. Youth with a Disability
 - h. Requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment (*requires pre-approval from TRPDD*)

B. Eligibility for Out-of-School Youth Programs

1. Not attending or enrolled in any school; and
2. Not younger than 16 and not older than age 24; and
3. Is in one or more of the following categories:
 - a. A school dropout;
 - b. A youth who is within the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter;
 - c. An individual who is subject to the juvenile or adult justice system;
 - d. A homeless, runaway, in foster care or has aged out of the foster care system, or in an out-of-home placement;
 - e. Pregnant or parenting;
 - f. An individual with a disability;

- g. Have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent who is low income and basic skills deficient or English language learner;
- h. Low Income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment

C. Definitions/Explanations Associated with Eligibility

1. Low Income as defined by WIOA

All in-school youth are required to be low income. Only out-of-school youth whose only barriers are B.3.g. or B.3.h above are required to be low income. Low Income is defined as an individual who can be placed in one or more of the following categories:

- a. **Receives/Received SNAP**
Individual who receives or in the past 6 months has received SNAP benefits or a member of a family who receives or in the past 6 months has received SNAP benefits
- b. **Receives/Received TANF**
Individual who receives or in the past 6 months has received TANF benefits or a member of a family who receives or in the past 6 months has received TANF benefits
- c. **Receives/Received SSI benefits**
Individual who receives or in the past 6 months has received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits or a member of a family who receives or in the past 6 months has received SSI benefits
- d. **Homeless individual as defined by the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 or the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
- e. **Individual who receives or is eligible to receive free or reduced lunch unless the individual attends a school that subsidize all student meals from the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. (When a school does not use individual eligibility criteria to determine who is eligible for free or reduced price lunch, whole school receipt of free or reduced price lunch cannot be used to determine WIOA low-income status for in-school youth. In schools where the whole school automatically receives free or reduced price lunch, WIOA programs must base low-income status on an individual**

student's eligibility to receive free or reduced price lunch or on meeting one of the other low-income categories under WIOA.)

- f. Foster Child
- g. Individual who is in a family that the total family income does not exceed the following income limits. See page 7 of this section for a listing of what is included as income.

LOW INCOME GUIDELINES FOR PY 2026		
FAMILY SIZE	Non-Metro Residents	Metro Residents (DeSoto, Marshall, & Tate Counties Only)
1	\$15,960	\$15,960
2	\$21,640	\$21,640
3	\$27,320	\$27,978
4	\$33,386	\$34,542
5	\$39,399	\$40,767
6	\$46,076	\$47,680
7	\$52,753	\$54,593
8	\$59,430	\$61,506
9	\$66,107	\$68,419
10	\$72,784	\$75,332

For family units in excess of ten (10) family members,

- 1. Add \$6,677 for each additional member if the family resides in a non-metro area, or*
- 2. Add \$6,913 for each additional member if the family resides in a metro area.*

- h. Individual with a disability whose own income does not exceed the income limits in the chart above.
- i. Is a youth who lives in a county with at least 25% poverty rate as set every 5 years using American Community Survey 5-Year data. The list of High Poverty Counties will be emailed to youth providers when it is released.

j. 5% Exception to Low-Income Requirement

WIOA also allows a low-income exception where up to five percent (5%) of WIOA youth may be participants who ordinarily would be required to be low income for eligibility purposes and meet all other eligibility criteria for WIOA youth except the low-income criteria. ***No youth may be enrolled into WIOA using the 5% low-income exception without prior permission from the Fiscal Agent.***

2. Basic Skills Deficiency

An individual is considered Basic Skills Deficiency if the individual:

- a. Is a youth who has an English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test (ex. TABE); or
- b. Is a youth or adult who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

The Mississippi Partnership Workforce Board has adopted the following guidelines to determine if a person is basic skills deficient:

- Is below 9th grade level as determined by an acceptable standardized test, such as TABE, or school records
- Scores below a Bronze Level on the WorkKeys® Workplace Documents or Applied Math assessments
- High school cumulative GPA below a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale (in-school youth only)
- Taken but not passed the State end-of-course exams in Algebra I, English II, Biology, and US History (in-school youth only)
- Taken the ACT test but has not met the College or Career Readiness Benchmarks for English/Reading (English subscore of 18 or Reading subscore of 22) and Math (Math subscore 22) (in-school youth only)
- Lacks a high school diploma or its equivalent and is not enrolled in secondary school
- Scores below an 80 on the Work Ready Screening Tool for Youth (youth participants only)

NOTE: The Work Ready Screening Tool for Youth was developed based on the Essential Job Skills training that all WIOA youth are required to receive. This tool it is designed to determine if the participant can function on the job.

3. Not attending or enrolled in any school

Below are guidelines in TEGL 21-16 to help determine the school status of youth when they are enrolled into WIOA.

– YouthBuild, Job Corps, or AE/HSE programs

Youth attending YouthBuild, Job Corps, or AE/HSE programs that are not funded by public K-12 school systems are considered as out-of-school youth.

– Youth between school years or between high school graduation and post-secondary (college) education

If a youth is enrolled in the WIOA youth program during the summer and is in between school years, the youth is considered an in-school youth if they are enrolled to continue school in the fall. If a youth is enrolled in the WIOA youth program between high school graduation and post-secondary education, the youth is considered an in-school youth if they are registered for post-secondary education, even if they have not yet begun post-secondary classes at the time of WIOA youth program enrollment.

However, if a youth graduates high school and registers for post-secondary education, but does not ultimately follow through with attending post-secondary education, then such a youth would be considered an out-of-school youth if the eligibility determination is made after the point that the youth decided not to attend post-secondary education.

– Non-credit bearing Post-Secondary classes

If the youth participant is enrolled in any credit-bearing post-secondary education classes, including credit-bearing community college classes and credit-bearing continuing education classes, then they are considered attending post-secondary education, and, therefore, an in-school youth. If the youth is only enrolled in non-credit-bearing post-secondary classes, they would not be considered attending post-secondary school and, therefore, an out-of-school youth.

4. Youth Requiring Additional Assistance

“Youth requiring additional assistance” is defined in the Mississippi Partnership Workforce Development Area as a youth who is low income and meets one of the following criteria:

- Lacks relevant work experience to secure or hold employment
- Lacks a credential related to a local target sector
- In need of an ITA to complete the Smart Start or Career Technical Pathway
- Has a court/agency referral mandating school attendance (ISY)
- A victim of or resides in an abusive environment
- Has neither the work experience nor the credential required for an occupation in demand for which training is necessary and will be provided (OSY)
- Has been fired from a job within six (6) months prior to application (OSY)
- Has never held a full-time job (30+ hours per week) for more than thirteen (13) consecutive weeks (OSY)
- Has a parent currently incarcerated
- Has been referred to or treated by an agency for substance abuse / psychological problems

WIOA Section 129(a)(3)(B) states that no more than five percent (5%) of in-school youth may be eligible based on the “Youth Requiring Additional Assistance Barrier.” No in-school youth may be enrolled in the WIOA In-School Youth Gateway Program with “Youth Requiring Additional Assistance” as his/her barrier without prior permission from the Fiscal Agent.

The Mississippi Partnership Income Inclusions & Exclusions

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE INCOME CALCULATION	
Included in Income Calculation	Excluded in Income Calculation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Money, wages, and salaries before any deductions (includes wages paid through the Senior Community Service Employment Program funded under Title V of the Older Americans Act) – Unemployment Compensation – Child Support Payments – Net receipts from non-farm self-employment (receipts from a person's own unincorporated business, professional enterprise, or partnership after deductions for business expense) – Net receipts from farm self-employment (receipts from a farm which one operates as an owner, renter, or sharecropper, after deductions for farm operating expenses) – Regular payments from railroad retirement, strike benefits from union funds, worker's compensation, and training stipends – Alimony – Military pay for applicants on active duty, military reserves or in the National Guard – Military family allotments or other regular support from an absent family member or someone not living in the household – Pensions whether private, government employee (Including military retirement pay) – Regular insurance or annuity payments – College or university grants, fellowship, and assistantships – Dividends, interest, net rental income, net royalties, periodic receipts from estates or trusts – Net gambling or lottery winnings – Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) payments – Social Security Old Age and Survivor's Insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public Assistance Payments (including TANF, SSI, RCA) – Capital gains – Any assets drawn down as withdrawals from a bank, the sale of property, a house or a car – Tax refunds, gifts, loans, lump-sum inheritances, one-time insurance payments or compensation for injury – Non-cash benefits such as employer paid fringe benefits, food or housing received in lieu of wages – Medicare, Medicaid, Food Stamps, school meals and housing assistance – WIOA income – Pell Grants, educational financial assistance received under title IV of the Higher Education Act (includes Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and Federal Work Study and Stafford and Perkins loans which are considered debt and not income) – Needs-based scholarship assistance (based on income as opposed to athletic scholarship) – Emergency Assistance or General Relief money payments – Veteran's benefits such as compensation for service-connected disabilities compensation for service-connected death, vocational rehabilitation, and education assistance