



# Workforce Issuance

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100 DCS 18.117

Policy  Information

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**To:** MassHire Workforce Board Chairs  
MassHire Workforce Board Directors  
MassHire Career Center Directors  
MassHire Fiscal Officers  
MDCS Operations Managers

**cc:** WIOA State Partners

**From:** Beth Goguen, Director  
MassHire Department of Career Services

**Date:** May 11, 2026

**Subject:** **Poverty Guidelines – Lower Living Standard Income Levels 2026**

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**Purpose:** To provide MassHire Workforce Boards, MassHire Career Center Operators and other local workforce partners with the annual update of income guidelines for use when determining economically disadvantaged/low-income status under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other programs. Lower Living Standard Income Levels were posted April 30, 2026, in the Federal Register under Employment and Training Administration.

**Background:** Title I of WIOA requires the U.S. Secretary of Labor (Secretary) to update and publish the LLSIL tables annually, for uses described in the law (including determination of eligibility for youth). Section 3(36)(A) of WIOA defines the term “low-income individual” as one who qualifies under various criteria, including an individual who receives, or received for a prior six-month period, income that does not exceed the higher level of the poverty line or 70 percent of the LLSIL. Section 3(36)(B) of WIOA defines “lower living standard income level” as, the income level (adjusted for regional, metropolitan, urban, and rural differences

and family size) determined annually by the Secretary of Labor based on the most recent lower living family budget issued by the Secretary.

WIOA Final Regulations 680.210 require local Workforce Boards to set criteria for determining whether employment leads to self-sufficiency. 100% of the LLSIL, as a minimum, must be used in the WIOA Title I self-sufficiency standard calculations.

In accordance with WIOA Final Regulations 681.280, an in-school youth who has a disability and whose own income does not exceed the higher of the poverty line or 70 percent of the lower living standard income is eligible for youth services.

Based on the publication of the Health and Human Services (HHS) poverty level guidance, the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has now published the Lower Living Standard Income Levels.

**Policy:**

With the publication of the HHS Poverty Income Guidelines and the ETA Lower Living Standard Income Levels for 2026, the higher of either the 2026 Poverty Income Guidelines or 70% of the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) shall be used for priority of service determination for WIOA Title I and other programs using economically disadvantaged/low-income status criteria.

Chief Elected Officials, Workforce Boards and program operators shall follow the Poverty Income Guidelines for 2026 in determining income eligibility for a family of one (1) and shall implement the 2026 70% Lower Living Standard Income Levels in the determination of eligibility for WIOA Title I and other programs using economically disadvantaged/low-income status criteria for families of two (2) or more. 100% of the LLSIL, as a minimum, must be used in establishing policy related to the calculation of local “self-sufficiency” standards for WIOA Title I. For workforce development areas covered by more than one set of LLSIL figures (where there is more than one type of metropolitan area), program operators should use the highest set of LLSIL guidelines for all cities and towns located within the entire workforce development area.

| <b>2026 70% Lower Living Standard Income Levels (LLSIL)</b><br><b>As determined by U.S. Department of Labor</b><br><b>Effective 2026</b> |  |                        |                              |
|--|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Family Size</b>   | <b>Boston-Brockton-Nashua, MA/NH/ME/CT</b> | <b>Northeast Metro</b> | <b>Northeast Non-Metro *</b> |
| 1  | \$15,686                                   | \$14,486               | \$14,056                     |
| 2  | 25,708                                     | 23,740                 | 23,040                       |
| 3  | 35,298                                     | 32,582                 | 31,630                       |
| 4  | 43,565                                     | 40,222                 | 39,038                       |
| 5  | 51,415                                     | 47,470                 | 46,074                       |
| 6  | 60,124                                     | 55,510                 | 53,873                       |
| Over 6 Increment   | 8,709                                      | 8,040                  | 7,799                        |

\* Metropolitan area measures were calculated from the weighted average Consumer Price Index-Urban (CPI-U) for city size classes A and B/C. Non-metro area measures were calculated from the CPI-U's for city size class D.

Note: Workforce development areas with at least one town or city in the Boston-Brockton-Nashua MA/NH/ME/CT Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) include Boston, Fall River, Brockton, Merrimack Valley, Metro North, Metro-South/West, Greater New Bedford, Greater Lowell, North Central MA, South Shore, North Shore and Central MA. Workforce development areas with at least one town or city within the New England Metropolitan Statistical Areas, but none with the Greater Boston MSA, include Berkshire, Franklin/Hampshire, Hampden County and Cape Cod.

| <b>2026 Poverty Income Guidelines</b><br><b>Published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</b><br><b>Effective 2026</b> |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Size of Family</b>  | <b>Poverty Guideline</b> |
| 1  | \$15,960                 |
| 2  | 21,640                   |
| 3  | 27,320                   |
| 4  | 33,000                   |
| 5  | 38,680                   |
| 6  | 44,360                   |
| 7  | 50,040                   |
| 8  | 55,720                   |
| Over 8 Increment   | 5,680                    |

| 2026 100% Lower Living Standard Income Levels (LLSIL)<br>As determined by U.S. Department of Labor<br>Effective 2026 |                                     |                 |                       |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Family Size  | Boston-Brockton-Nashua, MA/NH/ME/CT | Northeast Metro | Northeast Non-Metro * |
| 1  | \$22,409                            | \$20,694        | \$20,080              |
| 2  | 36,726                              | 33,914          | 32,915                |
| 3  | 50,426                              | 46,546          | 45,186                |
| 4  | 62,236                              | 57,460          | 55,769                |
| 5  | 73,450                              | 67,814          | 65,820                |
| 6  | 85,891                              | 79,300          | 76,962                |
| Over 6 Increment   | 12,441                              | 11,486          | 11,142                |

\* Metropolitan area measures were calculated from the weighted average Consumer Price Index-Urban (CPI-U) for city size classes A and B/C. Non-metro area measures were calculated from the CPI-U's for city size class D.

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**Action**

**Required:** Local areas should ensure that local policy and practice is consistent with the content of this issuance.

**Effective:** Immediately.

**References:** Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014  
WIOA Final Regulations, Federal Register 8/16/16  
Mass Workforce Issuance 100 DCS 18.101.6: WIOA Title I Eligibility requirements, 10/21/2022  
Federal Register Department of Health & Human Services Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines 1/15/26  
Federal Register Employment and Training Administration 4/22/26  
2026 Lower Living Standard Income Levels, Department of Labor

**Inquiries:** Please direct all inquiries to [PolicyQA@mass.gov](mailto:PolicyQA@mass.gov). Also, indicate Issuance number and description.