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| **WS 17-04 - Revised** |
| **February 20, 2017** |
| **Financial Aid** |
| **Expires: Continuing** |

To: All Contractors

From: Mike Temple

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Subject: Managing Financial Aid – Priority Criteria for Financial Aid Services

Purpose

Transmit guidance regarding the priority criteria that applies to certain funds used to provide Financial Aid services. This issuance updates and replaces issuance WS 17-04 issued February 13, 2015. Included is an additional priority criterion for Financial Aid for child care. Revisions are in **Bold** text.

Background

Workforce Solutions has a variety of Financial Aid Services. There are multiple funds that contribute to the Financial Aid we offer. Child Care and WIOA Adult/Dislocated Worker funds require a priority system for awarding financial aid to customers who meet eligibility and suitability criteria. The priority criteria for these funds are identified below

Funds with Priority Criteria

**Child Care**

First Priority includes the following groups of customers

* TANF Choices customers who are meeting participation requirements
* TANF Applicants
* SNAP E&T customers who are meeting participation requirements
* Customers transitioning from TANF Choices participation

Second Priority is dependent on the availability of funds and includes the following groups of customers in this order of priority.

1. Children who need to receive protective services child care
2. Children of a qualified veteran or qualified spouse
3. Children of a foster youth
4. **Children experiencing homelessness**
5. Children of parents on military deployment whose parents are unable to enroll in military-funded child care assistance programs
6. Children of teen parents
7. Children with disabilities
8. Board established priority customer groups
9. Siblings in families already receiving our financial aid for one or more children
10. Families participating in Workforce Solutions career, employment or education activities that require the financial aid to successfully complete their service
11. All other eligible families

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

WIOA Adult

First Priority includes customers who qualify as low-income1 or basic skills deficient2 with preference to customers who are a qualified veteran4 or qualified spouse5.

Second Priority - Customer must be at or below self-sufficiency3 income levels with preference to customers whoare a qualified veteran or qualified spouse.

WIOA Dislocated Worker

Priority includes customers who are a qualified veteran or qualified spouse

Applying Priority When Funding Services

**Child Care**

We fund assistance with child care expenses upon request for TANF Applicants and for SNAP E&T and TANF Choices customers meeting participation requirements. For all other customers who request financial assistance with child care expenses, we established a Registry of customers determined eligible for assistance. We first fund customers from the Registry according to this hierarchy:

1. Meet the first priority criteria described above or
2. Meet the second priority criteria, in order of preference described above.

We fund customers from the Registry who are not Priority as funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**WIOA Adult**

We established a Registry of customers who applied for financial assistance with work support, work experience, or training services and who were determined eligible for WIOA Adult funds and suitable for the assistance requested. We first fund customers from the Registry who meet the priority criteria described above (low-income). When there are no low-income customers on the Registry, we allow financial aid for customers on the Registry who are not low-income but are at or below the self-sufficiency income level as funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Exception: We project Workforce Solutions is able to provide short-term financial assistance to anyone requesting the assistance who qualifies.  There is not a priority process for customers requesting short-term financial assistance.

**WIOA Dislocated Worker**

We fund all customers determined eligible for WIOA Dislocated Worker funds with a preference given to customers who are qualified veterans or qualified spouses.

Exception: We project Workforce Solutions is able to provide short-term financial assistance to anyone requesting the assistance who qualifies.  There is not a priority process for customers requesting short-term financial assistance.

Definitions

1 Low-Income

An individual who meets any *one* of the following criteria satisfies the low-income requirement for WIOA adult services.

* Receives, or in the past six months has received, or is a member of a family that is receiving or in the past six months has received, assistance through SNAP, TANF, or the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, or state or local income-based public assistance;
* Receives an income or is a member of a family receiving an income that, in relation to family size, is not in excess of the current [Workforce Solutions Income Guidelines](http://www.wrksolutions.com/staff-resources/performance-improvement/desk-aids) for Adults;
* Is a homeless individual as defined in §41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of1994, or a homeless child or youth as defined in §725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;
* Receives or is eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Act (this only applies to the individual receiving the free or reduced-price lunch);
* Is a foster youth, as defined in Texas Family Code §264.101(a-1) and §264.101(d), on behalf of whom state or local government payments are made; or
* Is an individual with a disability whose own income meets:

 [Workforce Solutions Income Guidelines](http://www.wrksolutions.com/staff-resources/performance-improvement/desk-aids) for Adults, even if the individual’s family income does not meet the income requirements; or

 income eligibility criteria for payments under any federal, state, or local public assistance program.

2 Basic Skills Deficient

An individual 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 satisfies the basic skills deficient requirement for WIOA adult services.

3 Self-Sufficiency

Workforce Solutions defines self-sufficiency at 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Self-sufficiency for a family of four is about $48,500.

4 Eligible Veteran

A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable as specified at 38 U.S.C. 101(2). Active services include full-time duty in the National Guard or a Reserve component, other than full-time for training purposes.

5 *Qualified spouse*

The spouse of:

(A) any veteran who died of a service-connected disability or any member of the armed forces who died while serving on active military, naval, or air service.

(B) any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days:

1. missing in action;
2. captured in line of duty by a hostile force; or
3. forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power;

(C) any veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs;

(D) any veteran who died while a disability, as indicated in paragraph (3) of this section, was in existence.

Note: the spouse of a living veteran or service member (definitions B or C above) will lose his or her eligibility if the veteran or service member loses the status that is the basis for eligibility. For example, the spouse of a veteran with a total service-connected disability will not be eligible if the veteran’s disability is revised to a lower level. Similarly, a spouse whose eligibility is derived from a living veteran or service member will lose his or her eligibility upon divorce from the veteran or service member.

Action

Make sure staff are aware of this guidance regarding priority of service criteria for Workforce Solutions Financial Aid

Questions

Staff should ask questions of their supervisors first. Direct questions for Board staff through the [Issuance Q&A](http://www.wrksolutions.com/staff-resources/issuances/submit-a-question-issuances-qa).