
**DEPARTMENT
POLICY****Food Assistance Program (FAP) Only**

Categorically eligible groups automatically meet the asset and income limits for the Food Assistance Program (FAP).

Categorically eligibility applies to groups, not individuals. Bridges determines group composition prior to determining categorical eligibility.

**Categorically
Eligible Groups**

FAP groups are categorically eligible based on enhanced authorization for Domestic Violence Prevention Services (DVPS). If their gross income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, they are also categorically eligible.

Determination of categorical eligibility will be made at application, reported change and redetermination.

Note: Categorical eligibility does not mean applicants automatically receive FAP as clients must still meet all of the other program requirements.

Exception: All FAP groups are required to report and must close if they receive a single lottery or gambling winning of \$4,500 or more. All FAP groups that close for lottery or gambling winnings, will be required to verify assets if they reapply.

**Non-Categorically
Eligible Groups**

The following groups are **not** categorically eligible but are authorized to receive DVPS. They must meet income, asset and all other program requirements to receive FAP benefits.

Senior/Disabled/Disabled Veteran (SDV)

Groups which contain an SDV member and whose gross income is above 200 percent are **not** categorically eligible. They may still be eligible for benefits if their net income is below 100 percent of the poverty level, and they meet the asset limit; see Bridges Eligibility Manual ([BEM](#)) 400, [Assets](#), and [BEM](#) 550, [FAP Income Budgeting](#).

Disqualified Member

A group is **not** categorically eligible for FAP if **any** member of the group is FAP disqualified for:

- Intentional program violation (IPV).
- Fleeing Felon.
- Employment-related activity **only** when the disqualified person is the head of household.

**Excess Income
Denial****Categorically Eligible and Non-Categorically Eligible Groups
Excess Income Denial**

FAP groups must verify all countable income before an application or redetermination can be denied for exceeding the income limit. A VCL must be sent giving the group 10 calendar days to provide the income verification. If the group does not provide income verification by the VCL due date, the application or redetermination must be denied for failure to provide verification. If income verification is provided, the application or redetermination can be denied for exceeding the income limit, if applicable.

**APPLICATION
PROCESSING****Verification**

If questionable, verify that the group:

- Meets all the group composition requirements; see [BEM 212, Food Assistance Program Group Composition](#).
- Includes all persons who purchase and prepare food together in one FAP group, **and**
- Includes **no** persons who have been FAP **disqualified** for IPV, and/or fleeing felon, and/or employment-related activity (only when the disqualified person is the head of household).

If categorically eligible, do **not** verify for FAP purposes:

- That the group's income is within the gross income limit (130 percent) and net income limit (100 percent); see [RFT 250, FAP Income Limits](#).
- Social Security numbers.
- Sponsored alien information.
- Residency.

Note: Although the above eligibility factors are not verified for categorically eligible households, they must be verified if they are not verified by another program.

Postponing Denial

Postpone the denial of benefits for a potential categorically eligible group until the **30th day** if it is likely that the group will be categorically eligible.

ISSUING BENEFITS

Bridges will compute net income for all categorically eligible groups.

One and two member categorical FAP groups that exceed the gross and/or 100 percent net income limit, but whose gross income is at or below 200 percent of the poverty level, and all other FAP eligibility requirements are automatically eligible for the minimum benefit amount.

Three or more member categorical FAP groups that exceed the gross and/or 100 percent net income limit, but whose gross income is at or below 200 percent of the poverty level and who meet all other FAP eligibility requirements may be eligible for benefits as low as \$1 as determined by [RFT 260, Food Assistance Issuance Table](#).

Exception: Benefits are prorated in the initial month of application and benefits will not be issued if the issuance is less than \$10.

A case with zero benefits **will not** be opened in Bridges. Therefore, categorically eligible FAP groups with three or more members **will** be denied or closed **if** net income results in a zero benefit amount based on the Food Assistance Issuance Table.

**TERMINATION OF
CATEGORICAL
ELIGIBILITY**

When the group is **no** longer categorically eligible due to imposing a FAP disqualification for IPV, and/or fleeing felon, and/or employment-related activity (**only** when the disqualified person is the head or household), **all** FAP eligibility requirements are reviewed to determine whether the group remains eligible. Bridges will send a DHS-1605 to inform the client of any change in eligibility or benefit level.

LEGAL BASE**FAP**

7 CFR 273.2(j)

7 CFR 273.8

Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended