



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Transitional Assistance*


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Acting Commissioner

**Online Guide Transmittal 2022-61  
August 4, 2022**

**To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff**  
**From:**  **Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management**  
**Re: SNAP: SNAP Recipients Are Categorically Eligible for Head Start**

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**Overview**

Effective April 21, 2022, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced that families currently enrolled in SNAP are now categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services. Previously, this option was only available for families receiving TAFDC or SSI.

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**Purpose**

This Online Guide Transmittal advises staff that SNAP recipients are now categorically eligible for Head Start programs. Please note there are no updates to individual pages in the Online Guide.

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**Head Start Programs**

Head Start and Early Head Start programs promote the development of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children from low-income families by providing assistance to these families in the areas of health, early learning, and family well-being.

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**Head Start Programs (Continued)**

Services are offered in an array of settings including community centers, family child care providers, and children's own home. Head Start includes preschool programs, which primarily serve 3- and 4-year-old children, and Early Head Start programs that provide services to infants, toddlers, and pregnant women.

Head Start programs enroll children from birth to age five whose family income is at or below the poverty level, according to the federal Poverty Guidelines.

Categorical eligibility for Head Start is established for:

- children in foster care
- children experiencing homelessness
- children from families receiving TAFDC or SSI
- children from families receiving SNAP

In addition, pregnant women may also be eligible for Early Head Start.

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**Head Start Categorical Eligibility for SNAP families and DTA Staff Responsibilities**

The Office of Head Start (OHS) has expanded its interpretation of “public assistance,” as used in the Head Start statute, to include SNAP in its eligibility determination process.

Previously, families needed to document their income eligibility by providing paystubs or other income documentation. Head Start programs are now allowed to count receipt of SNAP in determining Head Start categorical eligibility, decreasing administrative barriers and improving access for SNAP families.

When completing an application interview with a client who has a child that is five years old or younger, staff must advise these clients about Head Start eligibility if the client appears eligible for SNAP. Staff must tell these clients that they can acquire more information by visiting [www.mass.gov/head-start](http://www.mass.gov/head-start) or by calling 866-763-6481.

This new Head Start rule does not automatically enroll a SNAP recipient into a Head Start program. Clients must independently apply for Head Start by using the website or the phone number provided above.

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**Questions**

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email the DTA.Procedural Issues Mailbox.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.

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