

Department of Social and Health Services

Olympia, Washington

EAZ Manual

Revision # 825

CATEGORY Student Status

[HTTP://WWW.DSHS.WA.GOV/MANUALS/EAZ/SECTIONS/STUDENTSTATUS.SHTML](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/manuals/EAZ/sections/studentstatus.shtml)

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Summary : The student status manual chapter was updated to explain that 6 credits is considered half time status by all public universities, technical colleges, and community colleges in Washington.

STUDENT STATUS

Revised April 4, 2012

Purpose: This section explains who is considered a student for the Washington Basic Food Program, which students are eligible for Basic Food, and when a client's student status begins and ends.

[WAC 388-482-0005](#) How does being a student impact my eligibility for the Washington Basic Food Program?

WAC 388-482-0005

WAC 388-482-0005 How does being a student impact my eligibility for the Washington Basic Food Program?

1. For Basic Food, we consider you a student if you are:

- a. Age 18 through 49;
 - b. Physically and mentally able to work; and
 - c. Enrolled in an institution of higher education at least half-time as defined by the institution.
2. An institution of higher education is:
- a. An educational institution that requires a high school diploma or general education development certificate (GED);
 - b. A business, trade or vocational school that requires a high school diploma or GED; or
 - c. A two-year or four-year college or university that offers a degree but does not require a high school diploma or GED.
3. If you are a student, you must meet one of the following conditions to be eligible for Basic Food:
- a. Have paid employment of at least twenty hours per week;
 - b. Be self-employed, work at least twenty hours per week, **and** earn at least the amount you would earn working twenty hours at the federal minimum wage;
 - c. Be participating in a state or federal work study program at the time you applied for Basic Food benefits. For the purpose of being eligible for Basic Food, work study is:
 - i. Working and receiving money from the work study program; and
 - ii. Not turning down a work assignment.
 - d. Be responsible for more than half the care of a dependent person in your Assistance Unit (AU) who is age five or younger;
 - e. Be responsible for more than half the care of a dependent person in your AU who is between age six and eleven if we have determined that there is not adequate child care available during the school year to allow you to:
 - i. Attend class and satisfy the 20-hour work requirement; or
 - ii. Take part in a work study program.
 - f. Be a single parent responsible for the care of your natural, step, or adopted child who is age eleven or younger;
 - g. Be an adult who has the parental responsibility of child who is age 11 or younger if none of the following people live in the home:
 - i. The child's parents; or
 - ii. Your spouse.
 - h. Participate in the WorkFirst program under [WAC 388-310-0200](#);
 - i. Receive TANF or SFA benefits; or

- j. Attend an institution of higher education through:
 - i. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA);
 - ii. The Food Stamp Employment and Training Program under [Chapter 388-444 WAC](#);
 - iii. An approved state or local employment and training program; or
 - iv. Section 236 of the Trade Act of 1974.
- 4. If you are a student and the only reason you are eligible for Basic Food is because you participate in work study, you are only eligible while you work and receive money from work study. If your work study stops during the summer months, you must meet another condition to be an eligible student during this period.
- 5. If you are a student, your status as a student:
 - a. Begins the first day of the school term; and
 - b. Continues through vacations. This includes the summer break if you plan to return to school for the next term.
- 6. We do not consider you a student if you:
 - a. Graduate;
 - b. Are suspended or expelled;
 - c. Drop out; or
 - d. Do not intend to register for the next school term other than summer.

This is a reprint of the official rule as published by the [Office of the Code Reviser](#). If there are previous versions of this rule, they can be found using the [Legislative Search page](#).

CLARIFYING INFORMATION

1. **General Rule:**

An adult who is enrolled **and taking** at least **six credits** (half time) in an institution of higher education is ineligible to receive Basic Food unless they meet one of the exemptions described in this section.

2. **Institutions of Higher Education Including Online Schools:**

An individual is considered enrolled in an institution of higher education if the individual is enrolled in a business, technical, trade, or vocational school that normally requires a high school diploma or equivalency certificate for enrollment in the curriculum or if the individual is enrolled in a regular curriculum at a college or university that offers degree programs regardless of whether a high school diploma is required. Institutions of higher education can also include online schools (for example: University of Phoenix) and correspondence schools as long as the entry criteria or degree

program characteristics are met and the student is considered attending at least half time.

Colleges or universities normally require diplomas or certificates but allow exceptions for some students who are not high school graduates to enroll in classes. These institutions are still considered institutions of higher education.

All Washington State public universities, technical, and community colleges consider 6 credits to be half time. If someone is attending a private college or university, half time status must be verified with the school.

3. **Courses not considered higher education:**

A student is not considered enrolled in an institution of higher education if the student attends only for the purpose of participating in one of the following programs:

- a. English as a second language (ESL);
- b. High school completion and GED courses including Running Start;
- c. Courses that are not a part of the regular college program; or
- d. A WIA program contracted by a college.

EXAMPLE

Kurt attends a technical college that offers both a two-year degree program and a one-year certificate program. The degree program requires a high school diploma or GED for enrollment, while the certificate program has no such requirements. Kurt is enrolled in the one-year certificate program curriculum. Since the certificate-only program that he is enrolled in does not require a diploma or GED, Kurt is not considered to be enrolled in an institution of higher education. Therefore, Kurt does not have to meet student eligibility requirements for Basic Food.

4. **When Student Status Ends:**

Student status ends when the student:

- a. Graduates;
- b. Is suspended or expelled;
- c. Drops out of school; or
- d. Doesn't intend to register for the next normal school term (excluding summer school).

5. **Employed Students:**

Employed students meet the eligibility criteria when they work at least 80 hours each month or average 20 hours per week. It is not necessary that they work 20 hours each week.

6. **Self Employed Students:**

Self-employed students meet the eligibility criteria when:

- a. They work an average of twenty hours each week; and
- b. Earn an amount at least equal to the federal minimum wage for twenty hours a week. The current federal minimum wage can be found at <http://www.dol.gov/whd/index.htm>.

7. **Care for a dependent person in the AU:**

In order for a client to be an eligible student based on their need to provide care for a dependent member of the AU, the client must be responsible for more than half of the care.

Because of this, one child cannot make more than one student eligible for Basic Food. See Worker Responsibilities below for recommended interview questions and documentation requirements for allowing student eligibility based on dependent care responsibilities when both parents live in the household.

8. **Income-in-kind:**

Income-in-kind isn't considered payment for work and cannot be used to establish hours of workweek.

EXAMPLE

Melanie works for the college during her summer break. Instead of paying her wages, the school deducts the income from her fall tuition costs. We cannot use the value of the work or the hours worked when we determine if she is an eligible student.

9. **Work Study:**

For work study to make someone an eligible student, the student must be both:

- Approved for work study for the school term; and
- Anticipate actually working during that time.

The student is eligible starting the month in which the school term has begun and they expect to start their work study assignment.

WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Determine if the person attending school is a 'student' for purposes of Basic Food:**

If a client attends school, determine if the client meets the definition of “student” for Basic Food before looking at whether or not that client is an eligible student. We don’t consider someone to be a student if they are:

- Under 18;
- 50 or over;
- Are physically or mentally unable to work; or
- In a program that doesn’t require a GED or Diploma and doesn’t offer a degree.

NOTE: If a client claims to be physically or mentally unable to work and the client's statement is questionable, verify the claim by:

1. Proof of permanent disability benefits issued by a public or private source; or
2. A statement from a qualified professional or their staff.

2. **Evaluate a student’s eligibility for Basic Food:**

- a. If you decide that a client meets the definition of a student, review the circumstances to decide if the person is an eligible student for Basic Food.
- b. Dependent care – When both parents are in the home:

Before allowing student eligibility based on dependent care responsibilities when both parents live in the household, determine why the other parent cannot care for the child in place of the student parent. Ask the following questions during the interview:

- i. Is the non-student parent employed?
- ii. If not employed or not working full time, why can’t this parent care for the child in the absence of the student parent?
- iii. Is the non-student parent disabled and not able to provide adequate care for the child?

NOTE: All responses to these questions must be documented in the case and/or the worker must thoroughly document why it was decided to allow or not allow student eligibility based on dependent care responsibilities

EXAMPLE

A student and her spouse have a 4 year old child. The non-student parent is not employed but is actively looking for work. The student parent cares for the child about 60% of the time. In this case the worker documents that since the non-student parent is actively looking for work by filing job applications and attending interviews the student parent needs to care for the child more than half the time to allow for the other parent's job search activities. The student is eligible for Basic Food.

3. **Determining Student Income**

Student income must be evaluated and verified for all students, even if the student does not have to meet student eligibility criteria.

EXAMPLE

Mark is a student at Western Washington University, attending half-time. He is 53 years old and does not have to meet student eligibility requirements. You must determine if he receives any countable or exempt student income.

Unearned:

Payments for the educational assistance of an AU member enrolled at a recognized institution of post-secondary education, school for the handicapped, vocational program or a program that provides for completion of a secondary school diploma or GED.

Earned:

Work study program wages are earnings from a program operated by a secondary or post secondary school in which the student works and earns money during the year.

Income-in-kind:

Income-in-kind is not considered payment for work and cannot be used to establish hours of work week.

Work Study:

For work study to make someone an eligible student, the student must be both:

- Approved for work study for the school term; and
- Anticipate actually working during that time.

The student is eligible starting the month in which the school term has begun and they expect to start their work study assignment.

Educational income:

All educational income excluded under [WAC 388-450-0035](#) is excluded and not counted in the eligibility or benefit determination. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (BEOG)
- Pell Grant

- Federal Supplement Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)
- State Student Incentive Grant (SSIG)
- Federal Direct Student Loan Program (FDSLPL)
- Guaranteed Student Loans (GSL)
- Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP), includes Federal Direct Stafford Loan, Unsubsidized Stafford Loan, Consolidated Loan, PLUS Program
- Federal Airlines Loan Program
- Bureau of Indian Affairs Adult Education, Higher Education, GED, Job Training and Technical School Programs
- Federal Work Study Programs
- TRIO Grants such as Upward Bound, Robert E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services
- Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship
- College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)
- High School Equivalency Program (HEP)
- National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership Program
 - HOPE Scholarship
 - Educational assistance received through the Montgomery GI Bill

NOTE: Some of the educational assistance sources named above (except funding from Title IV –HEA and BIA education assistance) will have funds not used for attendance costs that must be counted as unearned income. Make sure you refer back to [WAC 388-450-0035](#) for specific rules about when you can exclude the entire educational assistance amount.

Veteran's Administration Educational Assistance (including Montgomery GI Bill):

Subtract all attendance costs allowed in sub-sections (2) (a) and (b) of [WAC 388-450-0035](#) from the student's educational assistance. Budget the amount left as unearned income to the AU. Average this income over the period of time the VA states the assistance covers.

NOTE: Exclusions apply only to monies from an educational source and not to educational payments made from income available to the AU such as earnings, contributions from parents, TANF, etc. All educational assistance income must be verified.

See [WAC 388-450-0035](#) to determine how a client's educational income may impact their benefits.

Resources:

Educational income is not counted as a resource during the period of time the income is expected to cover (usually the school term).

EXAMPLE

Jake received a GSL of \$5,000 for the school term of September 1 through May 24. He put the money into a savings account to use as needed during the school months. The \$5,000 is excluded as a resource until it is no longer considered income (May 25).

Case Documentation:

Document in a case record how you determined that a student was eligible for Basic Food along with how you verified that the student is eligible for benefits. The verification may be obtained from the student, source, or school. Examples of verification are:

- **Responsibility for child:** Student's statement he/she is responsible for the child if there is an age appropriate child in the household. His/her explanation about the availability of adequate child care should be written and is acceptable, unless questionable. If questionable, further clarification is needed. For example, if the non-student parent in a two parent household is not employed, but the student claims to provide more than half the care for a child in the home, further inquiry and documentation is warranted to explain why the non-student parent does not provide the majority of care.
- **Physical or mental impairment:** If the disability is evident to the worker, no further verification is required. If not, verification may consist of temporary or permanent disability payments (paid because the individual is unable to work) from governmental or private sources (SSA, SSI, etc.), or a statement from the individual's physician or licensed or certified psychologist that the individual is unable to work.
- **School status:** Statement from the student that he/she is enrolled at least half time is acceptable unless questionable. If questionable, verification is required (examples; awards letter, statement from school regarding number of credit hours student is attending and how many credit hours are needed for at least half-time, etc.). Some schools may indicate the student is attending "part time". This must be clarified, as this does not mean "less than half time".
- **Income eligibility:** Work Study, TRA/TAA, and WIA may be verified by the student (awards letters, copies of checks, etc.), school (financial aid officer), or source (Job Services). TANF may be verified via ACES.
- **On-the-job Training:** Documentation from the employer that the individual is attending school as part of the employee's training.
- **BFET enrollment:** Basic Food applicants accepted for enrollment in an institution of higher education through the Basic Food Employment and Training program will provide a letter from the school indicating the student is enrolled in an approved program of study and will be accepted into the BFET program contingent upon DSHS approval of Basic Food benefits. See [WAC 388-444-0015](#) for more information about BFET.

NOTE: For more information and guidance, see [Student Eligibility Desk Aid](#).

See [Interview - \(DEM2\) screen.](#)

See [Interview - \(ALAS\) screen.](#)

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