



## General Information System (GIS) Message

### Section 1

<b>Transmittal:</b>	23DC054 Upstate and New York City
<b>Date:</b>	August 2, 2023
<b>To:</b>	Subscribers
<b>Suggested Distribution:</b>	SNAP Directors; TA Directors
<b>From:</b>	Valerie Figueroa, Deputy Commissioner, Employment and Income Support Programs
<b>Subject:</b>	SNAP Households are Categorically Eligible for Head Start Programs
<b>Effective Date:</b>	Immediately
<b>Contact Information:</b>	SNAP Policy Bureau at (518) 473 -1469 or <a href="mailto:otda.sm.cees.snap@otda.ny.gov">otda.sm.cees.snap@otda.ny.gov</a>
<b>Attachments:</b>	Attachment 1—SNAP Head Start Flyer (English) Attachment 2—SNAP Head Start Flyer (Spanish)

### Section 2

The purpose of this GIS is to inform social services districts (districts) of a change in federal Head Start policy that simplifies the process for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households to be deemed eligible for Head Start programs. In partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced on April 21, 2022, that SNAP recipients are now considered categorically eligible for Head Start programs.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs are designed to provide free, comprehensive services for children age birth through five years and their families. Core services focus on early learning, health, nutrition, and family well-being. Early Head Start programs are for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women, and provide up to 10 hours of care. Head Start preschool programs primarily serve three and four-year-old children, which include up to 6 to 8 hours of care. All services are free for those eligible and all meals are included.

Congress established eligibility criteria in the Head Start Act to include families with incomes at or below the federal poverty level and families eligible for public assistance. Prior to this change in Head Start policy, SNAP participation and eligibility was excluded from the term “public assistance”, requiring SNAP households to verify their income. Previous policy only considered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as “public assistance” in determining categorical eligibility for Head Start programs.

Now SNAP households are allowed to demonstrate their Head Start eligibility through providing verification of their SNAP receipt or eligibility and are no longer required to verify their income twice for

programs with similar requirements. To be deemed categorically eligible for Head Start services, SNAP households must provide acceptable verification such as a copy of a SNAP notice of approval, other documentation of eligibility or benefits from a local district office, or proof of an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card with a SNAP case number.

In an effort to increase awareness, districts are encouraged to display the attached *SNAP Head Start* flyer (in English and Spanish) in client waiting areas and on county websites. Please note, the printable *SNAP Head Start* flyer was created by HHS ACF to be shared by states, as such it will **not** be available via the eForms Intranet page or in hard copy from OTDA.

To find Head Start programs in your county, visit <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator>. For more information about Head Start and Early Head Start programs, visit: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/head-start-programs>. For more information about SNAP eligibility for Head Start programs, visit <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/ersea/article/snap-eligibility-head-start-services>.