

Families First Verification and Documentation

Policy 23.17

Effective: July 1, 2024

Introduction

Family Assistance eligibility staff must confirm all information provided to the Tennessee Department of Human Services that will have an impact on a customer's eligibility is accurate. All information received must also be documented in the eligibility and case management system to substantiate all actions taken on an application or existing case.

Scope

The purpose of this policy is to outline and detail all information that must be verified, when it must be verified, and what must be documented in the case record to establish, as accurately as possible, that the assistant unit meets defined eligibility criteria and that the benefit amount is correct.

Policy

Verification

Any decision made before the end of the standard of promptness period must be based on a clear determination of eligibility or ineligibility.

1. Obtaining and providing Verification is ultimately the responsibility of the Families First customer.
2. The caseworker should secure verifications when the information is known to the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) through automated data interfaces or when it is more reasonable for TDHS to secure the information.
3. The caseworker may render a decision of ineligibility for the assistance unit (AU) based on the customer's unverified statement of facts.
4. To render a decision of eligibility, the caseworker must be able to make a firm determination of eligibility based on verified points of eligibility.
5. If there is any doubt of eligibility, the caseworker must resolve it using the best evidence available, including documentary evidence, collateral contacts, and home visits.
6. The customer's statement of the facts can be accepted as verification when:
 - a. The AU has tried, without success, to obtain the needed verification; and
 - b. The customer has requested assistance and the caseworker has exhausted all means of securing documentary evidence, without success.

Note: The attempts made by both the customer and the caseworker must be documented in the eligibility and case management system.

Sources of Verification

1. Documentary Evidence - Documentary evidence is written proof that is utilized to support the information provided by the AU and make a determination of eligibility. Documentary evidence is considered to be the primary source of information.

2. Collateral Contacts - In the absence of documentary evidence, a collateral statement may be accepted. A collateral contact is a verbal confirmation of the AU's circumstances by an individual outside of the home who is knowledgeable of the facts being verified by the AU.
 - a. The caseworker may select the collateral contact or may ask the customer to provide a collateral contact.
 - b. The caseworker is not obligated to accept the collateral contact named by the customer.
 - c. The caseworker should interview the collateral contact thoroughly enough to ascertain the relationship and reliability of the collateral contact. This will ensure that a decision can be made through the collateral contact's statements.
 - d. A collateral contact should not be used to verify technical eligibility information such as relationship or citizenship.
3. Home Visits - A home visit may be scheduled to verify the AU's circumstances when there is no documentary evidence or collateral contact available. A home visit must be scheduled in advance with the household to complete or confirm a required verification and must not put an undue burden on the customer or the caseworker.

Verification Required at Initial Application

The following must be verified for all initial applications:

1. Residence;
2. Citizenship and/or Alien Status;
3. Social Security Number or application for a Social Security Number;
4. AU composition;
5. Age;
6. Relationship;
7. Living with a specified relative;
8. Marital status;
9. School attendance for children aged five (5) and older and all minor parents;
10. Immunizations and Health Checks for children;
11. Income, both earned and unearned, and from self-employment;
12. Resources;
13. How expenses are being met when expenses exceed income;
14. Dependent Care expenses;
15. Loans – confirm that any money the customer states is a loan has a repayment agreement to determine whether it would be considered countable income;
16. Striker status;
17. Disability or other exemption for the work and/or educational activity;
18. Pregnancy, conception date, and expected delivery date if no other children are in the AU; and
19. Inconsistent or questionable information provided by the applicant.

Verification Required at Renewal

The following must be verified at all renewals:

1. Residence;

2. Composition of AU;
3. School attendance;
4. Immunization and Health Check-Ups;
5. Living with a specified relative;
6. Enumeration - verify the Social Security Number of any members who have previously applied for a number and have not reported the number;
7. Pregnancy, conception date, and expected delivery date for family cap decision;
8. Gross income – earned, unearned, and self-employed;
9. Deductible expenses;
10. Resources;
11. Striker status;
12. How expenses are being met when expenses exceed income; and
13. Any other information provided by the customer that differs from the information previously verified or is/has become questionable.

Verification of Reported Changes

Customers are required to report ALL changes within ten (10) calendar days of the date the change becomes known to the AU.

1. Changes are subject to the same verification procedures and requirements that apply to initial applications or renewals.
2. All information that is reported to have changed must be verified.

Requesting Verifications

1. Verification must be requested in writing, and the request must be documented along with the due date.
2. The AU will have ten (10) calendar days to provide verification from the date of request.
3. The request for verification must offer to assist the customer with obtaining the verification.

Documentation

1. All pertinent information provided by the customer or a third (3rd) party concerning that may affect eligibility must be clearly documented in the eligibility and case management system. The documentation must include the following information:
 - a. Who provided the information;
 - b. What was provided;
 - c. When the information was provided;
 - d. How the information was verified; and
 - e. How the caseworker verified the accuracy of the information.
2. All documentary evidence provided by the AU must be documented to include all pertinent information as it relates to the case. This should include the following information:
 - a. What was received;
 - b. What information was contained in the verification;
 - c. Was any additional action to confirm the accuracy of the verification needed; and

- d. If the verification was not sufficient, why, and what additional information has been requested.
3. All actions taken in a case must be documented to include the following:
- a. The action that was taken;
 - b. Why the action was taken; and
 - c. The result of the action.

Supporting Documents

[Family Assistance Required Verifications](#)

[HS-2772 Verification Checklist \(English\)](#)

[HS-2772 Verification Checklist \(Spanish\)](#)

[HS-2772 Verification Checklist \(Arabic\)](#)

[HS-2772 Verification Checklist \(Somali\)](#)

Definitions/Acronyms

Term	Definition
Collateral Contact	An individual living outside of the household who is in a position to know the AU's circumstances.
Documentary Evidence	Written proof that is relied on as the basis, proof, or support of information provided by the AU and may be official or unofficial documents
Official documents	Documents that are prescribed or recognized as authorized and are most commonly provided by businesses, agencies, and organizations engaged in specific enterprises or service delivery such as social security card, utility bill, or award letter.
Unofficial documents	Documents that are not prescribed or recognized as authorized such as hand-written notes from employers, baby-sitters, etc.
Verification	The process of confirming or substantiating information provided by the customer.
Abbreviation	Expansion
AU	Assistance Unit
TDHS	Tennessee Department of Human Services

Supersedes

Policy 23.17 Families First Verification and Documentation, eff. date 10/15/2023

Approval History

Approved By	Approver Title	Approved Date	Effective Date
Clarence Carter	Commissioner	06/26/2024	07/01/2024
Clarence Carter	Commissioner	10/09/2023	10/15/2023
Cherrell Campbell-Street	Chief Officer of Programs & Services	02/17/2017	04/01/2017

Revision History

Date	Version	Location of Change	Description/Reason for Change
06/26/2024	07/01/2024	Policy Section	This policy revision replaced "incapacity" with "other".
10/09/2023	10/15/2023	Introduction, Policy Section, and Definitions.	Reworded some language; arranged sections for clarification; and updated hyperlinks.
02/17/2017	04/01/2017	N/A	New Policy

Approved By	<i>Clarence H. Carter</i>	Approval Date	06/26/2024
Authority	Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. Ch. 1240-1-16	Effective Date	07/01/2024
Application	All TDHS Family Assistance Staff and Contractors		