

## Family Services Initiative Eligibility Criteria

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***GUIDING PRINCIPLE:*** Families are able to obtain goods/services from the Family Services Initiative (FSI) once they have met eligibility criterion and established a need.

In order to participate in the FSI, a family must provide proof of the following:

- Pinellas County residency
- Custody of a child under the age of 18 in the household (or confirmed pregnancy)
- A valid Social Security number
- Income or financial benefits (verify according to poverty guidelines)
- Sustainability

If a service request for assistance exceeds \$300, ***participants will be subject to the 250% Federal Poverty Level income criteria, unless otherwise documented in the Agency's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreements (MOA).***

Eligibility requirements may only be waived by the FSI Exceptions Committee. The FSI Exceptions Committee is defined as a representative from each of the following agencies: The Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB) and 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc. (211TBC).

Some clients may re-enter FSI; however, extenuating circumstances may arise that can be evaluated to determine eligibility for a new request. New requests should be treated like all other service transaction requests according to the level of approval. If additional guidance is needed on a request, agency staff can review with their supervisor and/or send information to the Exceptions Committee for review and approval prior to purchase. If previous services were provided and the family failed to return receipts, no generic cards will be provided unless receipts are obtained for previous purchases.

### **Documentation for Eligibility:**

At minimum, all requests exceeding \$300 require proof of eligibility documentation to be scanned into the web-based JWB data collection system clearly visible under the family's primary client identification number unless otherwise stated in the Agency's MOU. Requests under \$300 (excluding rent and utilities) do not need to address income or sustainability in the narrative.

The FSI staff are responsible for making sure eligibility documents are obtained prior to making purchases or giving generic cards out to families. A one-time exception can be made if a family is unable to provide one or more of the documentation requirements pending a supervisory level approval and documented within the JWB data collection system. Staff must attempt to help family obtain sufficient documentation for eligibility. Any additional requests for services may be denied unless all documentation requirements are met. Eligibility documents are uploaded into the JWB data collection system.

**For Placement Assistance Programs Only:** Required eligibility documents may take additional time for families to obtain. In these instances, services should not be denied, as long as families and program staff are making diligent efforts to obtain the required documents and are documenting their efforts into the JWB data collection system. (Refer to FSI Data Entry Guide for more specifics)

**Acceptable documents for eligibility:**

**Verification of Residency:** Participants must be a Pinellas County Resident. A Pinellas County Resident can be verified by showing one or all of the following forms of documentation:

- FL Driver's License or FL Identification with Pinellas County address
- Current utility bill in the client's name (example: electric or water)
- Lease Agreement
- DCF benefits letter
- Social Security Administration letter
- A child being currently registered in a Pinellas County School or Licensed Daycare (last resort if no other alternative)
- Documentation from Shelter on agency letter head

**Verification of Minor Child:** Participants must have a minor child under the age of 18 or be pregnant to be eligible.

- Birth certificate of minor child with clients name listed as parent
- Custody documentation from court if non-parent
- DCF benefits letter
- Shot or immunization records with parent or guardian listed
- Exceptions for custody documents:
  - With notarized verification, relatives or non-relatives taking care of children because parents are not able (in hospital, jail, homeless, etc.)
  - Non-relative in process of adopting a child

**Verification of Social Security Number:** Participants must have a valid social security number for either a child or parent in the household to be eligible for FSI services.

- Copy of social security card
- Documentation with social security number from another government or public entity i.e. school, Internal Revenue Services

**Verification of Income:** Income is defined as all monies received directly by the family, gross earned and/or unearned.

- Copy of pay stub or written documentation from employer (i.e. on business letterhead or Income Verification Form)
- DCF benefits letter
- Unemployment letter
- Copy of SSI/SSDI benefits letter
- Proof of ledger, bank statements and/or receipts. No informal verification accepted i.e. handwritten or verbal verification

Use current Federal Poverty Level guidelines when confirming income criteria:

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/aspe-files/107166/2021-percentage-poverty-tool.xlsx>

If verification cannot be obtained through the listed documents above, other allowable documents can be used upon a supervisory level approval which may include:

WIC documentation (listing child, child's date of birth and parent), jail mug shot printout from Sherriff's office (in place of ID), passport, information from a case worker on agency letterhead that they are working with client for x,y,z, letter from licensed healthcare provider for pregnant women, or child support letter.

Please consult with your individual agency supervisor for verification of which documents are required to be uploaded in the JWB data collection system.

**Sustainability:** The family's monthly income is equal to or more than monthly expenses or it's probable it will be within the next 60 days. The income must be verifiable. The family has a plan to maintain on-going expenses if assistance for the current need is provided.

- Referring agencies must review a participant's plan for sustainability and document this plan in the JWB data collection system at the time the request is made.
  - **Examples:**
    - If rent is \$800 per month, income must be greater than or equal to the rent plus other fixed household expenses including utilities, transportation and etc.
    - If utilities are past due, income must be greater than or equal to the utilities plus other fixed household expenses including rent, transportation and etc.
    - If family needs food, there must be a plan to obtain benefits, visit food pantries or budget accordingly.
    - If children are in need of beds, family must be stable in their current home.

4/9/2021