


## Self-Sufficiency Policy #P-23-4.23

Re: Defining underemployed individuals (ALICE population) and ensuring that the benefit of receiving WIOA services leads to self-sufficiency.

Originated: April 12, 2023  
Approved: October 31, 2024  
Reviewed for Updates: March 25, 2026  
Updates Approved: N/A

References: WIOA Section 134(d)(1)(A)(x)  
WIOA Section 134(C)(3)(A)  
TEGL 12-15  
TEGL 03-15  
DHHS; Federal Poverty Guidelines, 87 Federal Register 3315

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### **I. Background:**

- A. SCPa Works constitutes that priority of service should be applied to veterans, public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Under the SCPa Priority of Service Policy #P-1-11.22, Section 4(B)(5)(d), SCPa Works includes individuals that are both underemployed and low-income.
- B. The policy ensures service access to these underemployed populations on a priority basis so that all individuals served within the South Central region can attain long-term, self-sustaining employment.

### **II. Purpose:**

- A. This policy sets forth the criteria for determining whether employment leads to a self-sufficient wage.
- B. This policy ensures the outcome of successful careers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations that will result in economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for underemployed individuals for advancement.

### **III. Definitions:**

- A. Self-Sufficiency – the financial ability of an individual or household to attain an acceptable level of functioning to provide adequate quality of life without the assistance of outside aid based on standards that determine the amount of income required to meet the basic needs of an individual or household.
  1. Self-sufficiency is the income level a person or family must be below to be eligible for WIOA services.

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2. Eligibility is determined by confirming that a client is unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment at the self-sufficiency wage or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career services alone.
  - a. The Self Sufficiency Wage for Pennsylvania can be found at [livingwage.mit.edu](http://livingwage.mit.edu).
- B. The Self-Sufficiency Standard – determines the amount of income required for working families to meet basic needs at a minimally adequate level, taking into account family, composition, ages of children, and geographic differences in costs. (WIOA Sec. 134)
- C. Living Wage – a budget-based financial measure defining the living cost for working individuals or households in relation to earned income.
- D. WIOA-Funded Individualized Career Services – classroom, virtual, or on-the-job training engagements that prepare individuals for employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, entrance into further education and training, or advancement within an existing profession.
- E. Underemployed Worker – an individual who cannot get a full-time job that makes use of their skills and therefore is unwillingly working a low-skill job, a part-time job, or a job that does not pay a living wage, leaving the worker unable to meet the Self-Sufficiency Standard.
  1. An underemployed worker may also require additional education, career and technical training, or workforce preparation skills to obtain and retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency.

**IV. Criteria for Self-Sufficiency**

- A. SCPa Works has set the criteria for self-sufficiency at 235% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG).
- B. An individual living in the SCPa Works service area earns below the self-sufficiency wage if the following criteria are met:
  1. The individual’s gross earned income is below 235% of the FPG; and
  2. The individual is a member of a family whose combined gross earned income is below 235% of the FPIG based on family size.
- C. Data reflecting current FPIG salaries to include 100% of the FPG, and 235% FPG levels for the SCPa Works region can be found at [pa.gov](http://pa.gov)

**V. CWDS Procedure**

- A. If the wages of a WIOA-eligible Adult or Dislocated Worker are less than 235% percent of FPIG, the case manager or intake specialist will choose “No” as the answer to the self-sufficient category on the Commonwealth’s Workforce Development System (CWDS) WIOA application.
- B. Document eligibility in a participant’s case file using paystubs provided by the participant or through self-attestation

**Summary of Changes:** This policy is reviewed every 180 days by the SCPa Works Policy Department for necessary changes, edits, updates, and revisions.

Date of Change:	Changed by:	Summary of Change(s):	Effective Date
03.25.2026	Saranne Miller <i>smiller</i>	Reviewed for changes. Adjusted the living wage access by adding a link to the policy definition section. Removed the FPIG chart and replaced it with a link to pa.gov for access to current FPIG data. Board approval is not necessary.	03.25.2026

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