

## Difference between Poverty Thresholds and Poverty Guidelines

There are two slightly different versions of the federal poverty measure: poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines.

The **poverty thresholds** are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the Census Bureau. The thresholds are used mainly for statistical purposes — for instance, preparing estimates of the number of Americans in poverty each year. (In other words, all official poverty population figures are calculated using the poverty thresholds, not the guidelines.)

The **poverty guidelines** are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for **administrative** purposes — for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. The poverty guidelines are sometimes referred to as the “federal poverty level” (FPL).

At the end of January, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released their poverty guidelines to account for last calendar year's increase in prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index. The poverty guidelines are used as an eligibility criterion by the Community Services Block Grant program and a number of other Federal programs (such as, Head Start, LIHEAP, SNAP, WIC, Weatherization, etc.). The poverty guidelines are a simplified version of the poverty thresholds that the Census Bureau uses to prepare its estimates of the number of individuals and families in poverty. As in prior years, these 2017 guidelines are roughly equal to the poverty thresholds for calendar year 2016 which the Census Bureau expects to publish in final form in September 2017.

Below are HHS’ 2017 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia. The 125% rate that Community Action is directed to use is emphasized below.

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1 .....	\$15,075
2 .....	\$20,300
3 .....	\$25,525
4 .....	\$30,750
5 .....	\$35,975
6 .....	\$41,200
7 .....	\$46,425
8 .....	\$51,650

[CLICK HERE](#) and scroll down to the first bullet point under Additional Resources to download a spreadsheet showing percentage multiples of the poverty guidelines.