

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

DEPARTMENT POLICY: DCF.P5.01-2007

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 31, 2007

SUBJECT: **Client Eligibility - Minimal Department Standards**

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to set forth the basic criteria to be used in determining and re-determining client eligibility for services. Some contracting Departmental Components have developed additional eligibility and admission standards in order to ensure that services are delivered to those individuals most in need. These additional eligibility and admission standards may be consistent with applicable federal and State laws or with the criteria contained in this policy. Such supplemental standards are included in the Manual at DCF.P5.45-2007, Client Eligibility - Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS).

The standards outlined below and any supplemental criteria specified by the contracting Departmental Component must be met in order for applicants/recipients to receive or continue to receive DCF services.

**II. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all DCF social services Contracts. This policy does not apply to controlled research projects where client participation is determined by the research specifications rather than by these principles.

**III. POLICY**

**A. General Eligibility Principles**

The Department is responsible for ensuring that services are delivered to those most in need; therefore, target populations have been established. The priority for all Department services is listed below in no significant order:

1. Persons at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment;
2. Victims of abuse, neglect, or abandonment;
3. Persons experiencing emotional disorders;
4. Persons at risk of institutionalization;
5. Persons inappropriately institutionalized;
6. Persons physically handicapped, visually or hearing impaired;
7. Persons developmentally disabled;
8. Underserved minority populations; and
9. Low income persons.

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**B. Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals Applying for Services**

When applying for services, applicants shall be informed of the eligibility requirements and their rights and responsibilities under the social services program. These rights and responsibilities are as follows:

**1. Citizenship and Residency**

Any individual who resides in New Jersey may qualify to receive services regardless of citizenship or duration of residency.

**2. Nondiscrimination**

Applicants for or recipients of services shall not be discriminated against due to race, color, creed, religion, ethnic background, national origin, marital status, handicap, age, or sex, and may be subject only to conditions and limitations applicable alike to all persons.

**3. Right to Administrative Hearing/Administrative Review**

Applicants for or recipients of services or individuals acting on their behalf may appeal the denial, reduction, or termination of services as well as the failure to act upon a request for services with reasonable promptness, or the level or quality of services provided. The individual shall be informed of the procedure for requesting an administrative hearing/review at the time that a request for services is made or prior to a reduction or termination of services.

**4. Confidential Client Information**

Applicants for or recipients of services have a right to confidentiality regarding any information collected in determining or redetermining eligibility. If the documentation of eligibility requires contacting outside sources, (including employers) and the applicant or recipient wishes to keep the nature of the services confidential, they may request that such contacts be made by the Departmental Component administering the Contract.

**5. Provision of Information**

Applicants for or recipients of services or individuals acting on their behalf are obligated to provide or obtain all information needed to establish eligibility.

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6. Reporting Changes

Applicants for or recipients of services or individuals acting on their behalf are obligated to report promptly any changes that may affect eligibility.

C. Application for Services

This section outlines minimum requirements that must be met when processing applications.

1. Timeliness

Individuals wishing to apply for services must be given the opportunity to do so without undue delay.

2. Decision/Notification

A determination must be made regarding each completed application for services that is submitted. Applicants shall be provided written notice regarding the determination within 30 Days from the date that all necessary documents were received.

3. Denial of Services

If a determination is made to deny services, the applicant must be notified in writing of the decision, the reason(s) why the services are being denied and his/her right to and the procedure for requesting an administrative hearing/review. (Exceptions to this requirement are outlined below.)

D. Minimum Client Information Requirements

The Provider Agency shall maintain written individual records, containing the following informational items for all service applicants and recipients. This information may not be used as a basis for determining whether or what kind of services will be provided. It will be used for statistical purposes only.

1. Name
2. Address
3. Social security number
4. County of residence
5. Age
6. Race
7. Date of eligibility determination or redetermination

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E. Exceptions to Minimum Client Information Requirements

Exceptions to collecting the minimum information outlined above may be made when crisis intervention or information and referral services are requested or provided. This is due to either the emergency nature of the service (crisis intervention) or the brief duration of the service and limited client contact (information and referral), which may make it impossible to obtain all of the required information. For these two services, an attempt should be made by the Provider Agency to obtain all of the client information specified in this policy. However, if all information cannot be obtained, the Provider Agency shall gather as much information as possible. The Provider Agency shall, at a minimum, collect and maintain records regarding the number of clients who receive these services. Exceptions to collecting minimal client information for other services are allowable only with prior written approval from the Department's Office of Contract Policy.

F. Reduction or Termination of Services

A recipient whose service is being reduced or terminated must be notified in writing at least 10 Days prior to such action by the Provider Agency. The written notice must also include a statement informing the recipient of his/her right to an administrative hearing/review.

G. Exception to Written Notice

In protective services cases, when the applicant/recipient's confidentiality and/or safety might be jeopardized, written notice need not be sent. Documentation of the circumstances which prohibit notifying the applicant/recipient in writing must be entered in the individual's case record. Documentation of how the applicant/recipient was notified, e.g., interview or telephone call, shall be noted in the case record.

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Commissioner