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200 Recruitment and Selection of Participants

A. Recruitment of New Participants
In order to help the greatest number of eligible seniors, project sponsors must make sure the maximum possible number of eligible people participates. Sponsors may serve a larger number of participants than stipulated in their sponsor agreement. To keep the amount of vacant positions low, it is helpful for the project sponsor to keep a waiting list of eligible applicants. Project sponsors must organize their waiting lists in accordance with the enrollment priorities found throughout section 201 Enrollment Priorities and enroll participants from the waiting list in conjunction with the priorities.

Sponsors must use the appropriate American Job Center’s delivery system in recruiting and selecting individuals, but sponsors may use other, additional services as well.
In addition, project sponsors should ensure their recruitment efforts are inclusive of potential participants of all backgrounds and give priority to certain individuals as required by law and regulation (see section 201 Enrollment Priorities).

Eligible individuals who are willing to actively seek and secure unsubsidized employment are most suited for SCSEP.

B. Recruitment from Specific Jurisdictions Is Required
Project sponsors serving more than one jurisdiction – for example, more than one county or incorporated city – should recruit specific numbers from each county or incorporated city as appropriate to comply with SCSEP’s equitable distribution requirements as set by the U.S. Department of Labor. Equitable distribution is based on the participant’s jurisdiction: for example, county or incorporated city of residence. Project sponsors can find their equitable distribution allocations in Attachment A of their Sponsor Agreement.

C. Employment Status of Participants
Participants are not employees of the federal government or SSAI.

Participants are employees of the project sponsor for certain payroll purposes, but because they are participants in a federal training program, they should not be considered employees of the project sponsor for other purposes.
201 Enrollment Priorities

Sponsors must prioritize the eligible people they select for SCSEP participation by using three criteria (for more information, see section 202 Determining Eligibility). The first criterion is for veterans and qualified spouses of veterans (see section 201-A Priority Must Be Given to Veterans); the second criterion is a set of nine characteristics (listed in section 201-B Enrollment Priorities Must Be Used); and the third criterion is for most-in-need individuals (see section 201-C Most-in-Need Individuals Are Service Priority).

A. Priority Must Be Given to Veterans

The first criterion requires that veterans or their qualified spouses be given FIRST priority of enrollment, regardless of age. In other words, participants must be selected for SCSEP participation in the following order:

- First: Veterans or qualified spouses, regardless of age, with one or more of the other enrollment priority characteristics found in section 201-B Enrollment Priorities Must Be Used;
- Second: Veterans or qualified spouses without any of the other enrollment priorities found in section 201-B; and
- Third: People who are not veterans or qualified spouses but who have one or more of the other enrollment priorities found in section 201-B.

A veteran is defined as a person who served in the active military, Navy or Air Force who was not dishonorably discharged or released. Active service includes full-time duty in the National Guard or a Reserve component, other than full-time duty for training purposes.

A qualified spouse of a veteran is defined as the spouse of a veteran who has a service-connected total disability, died of a service-connected disability or has been listed for more than 90 days as missing in action, captured in the line of duty by a hostile force, or forcibly detained by a foreign power.

Following the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court that the Defense Against Marriage Act (DOMA) was unconstitutional, it is now the policy of DOL and SSAI both (a) to recognize all marriages (including same-sex marriages) that are lawfully entered in the state of celebration and (b) to recognize same-sex marriage even if the marriage is not recognized in the state where the married individual resides as long as the marriage could have been entered into in a state.

In addition, per DOL, SSAI requires its sponsors to recognize the same-sex spouse of a veteran as a qualified spouse of a veteran if the individual fits the definition of a qualified spouse above.

B. Enrollment Priorities Must Be Used

The second criterion requires that participants with the following eight characteristics be selected for participation ahead of people without any of the characteristics:

1. **First Priority**: Are veterans or qualified spouses of veterans, regardless of age (see section 201-A Priority Must Be Given to Veterans); THEN
2. Are age 65 or older;
3. Have a disability;
4. Live in a rural area;
5. Have low employment prospects;
6. Have failed to find employment through the American Job Center/One-Stop delivery system;
7. Are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless; and
8. Have limited English proficiency or have low literacy skills.
These initial enrollment priority characteristics are determined during a participant’s initial interview and assessment during enrollment and may not be changed after enrollment. They serve to measure whether we are enrolling based on priorities of service. Only limited English proficiency and low literacy skills may be updated for MIN Re-validation (see section 201-C Most-in-Need Individuals Are Service Priority).

C. Most-in-Need Individuals Are Service Priority

Sponsors also must make sure they meet or exceed their goals for serving individuals who are most in need (MIN). The number of MIN individuals served is one of the core performance indicators that apply to SCSEP grantees. (For more information, see section 101-D SSAI Performance Measures.)

Individuals who qualify as most in need are those with any of 13 characteristics, which include eight of the characteristics that give them priority for participation – with one exception: they must be age 75 or older, rather than age 65 or older. The 13 characteristics that qualify an individual as most-in-need are the following:

1. Are veterans or qualified spouses of veterans (see section 201-B Enrollment Priorities Must Be Used);
2. Have a disability;
3. Live in a rural area;
4. Have low employment prospects;
5. Have failed to find employment through the American Job Center/One-Stop delivery system;
6. Are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless;
7. Have limited English proficiency;
8. Have low literacy skills;
9. Have a severe disability;
10. Are frail;
11. Are age 75 or older;
12. Be old enough for Social Security retirement but not receiving it; and/or
13. Have severely limited employment prospects in an area of persistent unemployment.

See the Data Validation Checklist in the Appendix II for the documentation required to validate or re-validate MIN characteristics.

The first six characteristics, which are assessed at time of enrollment, are only used to measure MIN at enrollment and may not be changed after enrollment is completed.

Unlike the first six characteristics, you may update the boldfaced characteristics (numbered 7 through 13 above) at any point when the participant’s conditions change after enrollment and you become aware of them.

In order to secure full credit for MIN performance annually, subgrantees must reconfirm the boldfaced characteristics above numbered 7 through 13 every July, and project sponsors should use SSAI’s MIN Update Form.

SSAI uses several methods to target MIN individuals including:

- Encourages recruitment through intermediary organizations such as health clinics and other health-care providers, transportation and other service providers to the elderly, homeless shelters, veterans’ organizations and VA offices, food banks, and ex-offender programs;
- Uses U.S. Census data research to provide local zip codes with high concentrations of MIN SCSEP-eligible individuals;
• Provides tools for subgrantees to better serve limited-English individuals, such as its 2006 guide, *Engaging Immigrant Seniors in Community Service and Employment Programs*; and

• Encourages direct outreach through such techniques as door-to-door canvassing, group presentations at churches and senior centers, and placing flyers in neighborhood stores.

D. Service to Minority Individuals

The Older Americans Act (OAA) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) require SSAI to report on the levels of participation and performance outcomes of minority individuals served by the SCSEP, such as Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and other minorities. As a result of this OAA requirement, the DOL has set annual goals for SSAI to achieve with regards to services to minorities. Therefore, SSAI requires sponsors to meet the enrollment goals by enrolling minority individuals in conjunction with the enrollment priorities found throughout section 201 Enrollment Priorities. (For more information, see section 900-D Review of Reports.)
202 Determining Eligibility

A. When to Determine Eligibility
Initial eligibility is determined at the time an individual applies to participate in the SCSEP. Participants’ continued eligibility must be verified at least once every 12 months. SSAI will inform sponsors each year of the month in which they must verify participants’ continued eligibility.

Eligibility also may be verified as circumstances require, including when enrollment is delayed. (For more information, see section 601 Recertification of Eligibility.)

Eligibility criteria are defined and explained in section 203 SCSEP Eligibility Requirements.

B. Ineligible Applicants
Individuals who otherwise meet all eligibility criteria – see section 203 SCSEP Eligibility Requirements – are not eligible for enrollment if they have any of the following characteristics:

- Younger than age 55;
- Have total includable family income greater than 125% of the Federal Poverty Limit (see section 204 Computing Income for Eligibility);
- Are actively employed;
- Have been in the SCSEP program for more than 48 months. The four-year time limit is cumulative and includes any participation with any other SCSEP providers; and
- Are “job ready” (applicants who do not need more education or training to perform work that is available in his or her labor market).

Individuals are considered to be employed on the date of participation if they meet any of the following conditions:

- They did any work as a paid employee on the day of enrollment or participation unless they received a termination notice or the employer has issued a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) or other notice that the facility or enterprise will close, or if they are on active military duty and have received a firm date of separation from military service;
- They did any work at all in their own business, profession or farm;
- They worked 15 hours or more unpaid in an enterprise operated by a family member;
- They were not working, but had a job or business from which they temporarily were absent because of illness, bad weather, vacation, labor-management dispute, or personal reasons, whether or not paid by the employer for time off, and whether or not seeking another job.

Individuals are not considered employed at the date of participation if they are receiving stipends for work in Senior Corps programs under the Corporation for National and Community Service: Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, the Senior Demonstration Programs and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.
A “job ready” individual is defined as a person who does not need more education or training to perform work that is available in his or her labor market. For example, individuals who require no more than job club or job search assistance to be employed are job ready. People who fit this definition include individuals who have the following characteristics:

- Are employed even if part-time;
- Were recently unemployed but have a skill set to fill jobs available in their area; or
- Have received sufficient training from SCSEP or some other employment and training program to be able to perform work that is available in the labor market.

An unemployed person is an individual who is without a job and who wants and is available for work. The unemployed rule does not apply to casual, non-recurring labor for which a participant may be compensated. For example, if a participant occasionally shovels a neighbor’s sidewalk or occasionally baby-sits for a friend’s child and receives payment, that would not constitute disqualifying employment unless the participant were regularly engaged in the business of snow removal or providing child care.

If the project sponsor determines an applicant is job ready or ineligible for participation in SCSEP for other reasons, the project sponsor must refer the individual to services in the American Job Center or other partners, and inform the applicant of their right to file a complaint (for more information see Section 805-D).

C. Right of Return

The Right of Return is limited to those participants who exit SCSEP due to an unsubsidized employment. If the participant fails the placement, meaning they did not stay employed for 30 days within the first 90 after exiting, the participant may return to the program within 90 days of exiting.

Only participants who have failed placements for the following reasons can exercise the right to return:

- Have received layoff notice from the employer;
- Have poor skills match that can be documented;
- Resigned for health or medical reasons; or
- Resigned for family health or medical reasons.

Right of Return is not applicable if the former participant simply quits his or her job.

Such participants may return to the program without being subject to the enrollment paperwork or enrollment priorities (see section 201 Enrollment Priorities). Right of Return functions as if the participant never exited SCSEP. Therefore, a participant who exercises Right of Return only counts once towards your service-level goal. If the sponsor’s budget cannot sustain the individual returning immediately, the individual should be given the next available assignment or opportunity. Participants who practice a Right of Return are not to be waitlisted.

NOTE: Participants who are exercising the Right of Return – following a failed unsubsidized placement are not allowed to return to the previously held community service assignment. You must create a new community service assignment even if you assign the participant to the previous host agency.
Use field 27 of the *SCSEP Unsubsidized Employment Form* to record whether a participant who worked less than 30 days is electing to return to the program. You delete the exit reason (field 5) and the exit date (field 7) from the *SCSEP Unsubsidized Employment Form*, and you must delete the “yes” in field 28 if you have already recorded entered employment. You also fill out a new *SCSEP Community Service Assignment Form* to document the host agency assignment. Use the comment field on the *Unsubsidized Exit Form* to explain what you have done. The participant will not be included in the outcome measures until the participant again exits the program.

### D. Re-Enrollment Is at Sponsor’s Discretion

A *SCSEP Participant Form* is required for each new enrollment (see 202-A When to Determine Eligibility). Re-enrollment is at the discretion of the sponsor. Sponsors are not required to provide anyone a second opportunity to participate in SCSEP, especially when there are so many eligible seniors who have never had the benefit of the program, and former participants do not have an automatic right to re-enroll. In deciding whether to exercise their discretion to reenroll any former participant who otherwise satisfies the eligibility criteria (including the requirement that the individual needs additional time in a community service assignment in order to become job-ready), sponsors should consider whether the individual:

- has taken full advantage of the opportunity afforded by the prior enrollment;
- has demonstrated a commitment to the program's objectives;
- has violated any conduct standards during the prior enrollment.

Focusing exclusively on these considerations, which permit the program to take into account the participant's behavior during the prior enrollment and the circumstances of their leaving the program, is likely to protect the interests of the SCSEP program without violating either the law or the participant’s rights. To ensure that these considerations are not used in a discriminatory fashion, they should be applied in all cases in which a former participant seeks re-enrollment and the Sponsor should maintain documentation in each instance of the factors leading to his decision not to re-enroll a participant.

Sponsors should consider the circumstances of the participants prior to exit from SCSEP, for example, whether the participants were terminated for cause or whether they are now job-ready. Former participants who are determined to be job-ready should be referred to the American Job Center and are not eligible for re-enrollment (see section 202-B Ineligible Applicants).

If re-enrollment occurs within the first 90 days after exit, complete Question 27a on the *SCSEP Unsubsidized Employment Form*, then complete a new *SCSEP Community Service Assignment Form*, then update in SPARQ.

### E. Determining Eligibility / SCSEP Participant Form

The *SCSEP Participant Form* documents each applicant’s eligibility and provides information on the applicant’s age, income, place of residence and current status of employment. Project sponsors must properly determine an applicant’s eligibility by accurately recording the applicant’s personal information on the *SCSEP Participant Form* and reviewing all supporting documents provided.

To ensure all applicants have an understanding of the eligibility requirements, the interviewer should explain the meaning of words or terms on the *SCSEP Participant Form* that are unclear. The interviewer also should make sure the applicant understands that upon signing the *SCSEP Participant Form*, he or she is affirming that all the information provided on the form is true – and if any of the material information is found to be false after enrollment, he or she may be terminated.

The project sponsor must enter the completed forms in SPARQ within 5 calendar days and keep a copy of the form and all supporting documentation on file. The *SCSEP Participant Form* contains personal information and should be filed and be kept confidential.
The SCSEP Participant Form is available in this manual’s Appendix II and on the partners’ page of the SSAI’s website at http://seniorserviceamerica.org.

F. Source Documentation Requirements for SCSEP Participant Form

SSAI has developed the following forms to assist projects in meeting the data validation requirements related to participant enrollment as set forth by the U.S. Department of Labor:

- **SCSEP Family Size Form** – to document the size of the family for income calculation purposes;
- Sample/Blank Income Worksheet – to document the math used to calculate the includable income amounts from each family member and income methodology used to determine income eligibility (for more information, see section 204-G Income Worksheet);
- **SCSEP Self-Attestation Forms** – to document a participant’s self-attest to: homeless, at-risk of homelessness, failed to find employment after being enrolled in WIOA Title I Services, limited English proficiency; low literacy, low employment prospects, Veterans status (if discharged prior to 1950), unemployed at time of enrollment, and zero income (with explanation of how the participant supported themselves); and
- **SCSEP Case Management Note Form** – to document the following status and information about a participant: homeless, at risk of homelessness, number in family (for both initial eligibility or recertification), unemployed at time of enrollment, failed to find employment after being enrolled in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I Services, limited English proficiency; low literacy, low employment prospects or approved break in service.

Completed copies of these forms or other appropriate data validation source documentation (must be kept in the participant’s file. These forms, including the SSAI Data Validation List, can be found in Appendix II and on the partners’ page of SSAI’s website at http://seniorserviceamerica.org.

G. False Information as Cause for Termination

If a project sponsor discovers that a participant knowingly gave false information and was improperly determined to be eligible as a result of this false information, the project sponsor must immediately give written notice to the participant. The written notice must include:

- An explanation of the reasons for termination;
- Notice that the participant is on administrative leave without pay for 30 days;
- Their exit date 30 calendar days from the date of the written notice; and
- Information on the participant’s right to appeal the termination including the appropriate timeframes and names of the individual to whom the appeal should be made.

Such participants may not be terminated until 30 calendar days after they receive the written notice. The project sponsor does not have to refer such participants to other sources of assistance or to the American Job Center/One-Stop delivery system.

There are numerous other causes for termination. For more information, see section 603 Termination. A sample Termination Letter is available in this manual’s Appendix II and on the partners’ page of SSAI’s website at http://seniorserviceamerica.org.
H. Program Participants May Not Sign as Interviewers

Participants assigned to SCSEP project services may assist the project director in interviewing and gathering information on other potential participants. However, the project director or a paid staff member (i.e., not a participant) must verify eligibility and sign the SCSEP Participant Form.

The SCSEP Participant Form is available in this manual’s Appendix II and on the partners’ page of SSAI’s website at http://seniorserviceamerica.org.
203 SCSEP Eligibility Requirements

A. SCSEP Eligibility Requirements
Age, income, place of residence, employment status and duration on SCSEP are the criteria used to determine whether a person is eligible for SCSEP. The criteria for age, income and employment must be met by all applicants and those being recertified for continued participation. However, place of residence applies at enrollment, but not at recertification.

The definitions of the five eligibility criteria are the following:

1. Age – An individual must be 55 years of age or older on the date eligibility is determined. There is no upper age limit for participation in SCSEP.

2. Income – Individual (or family) income must not exceed 125 percent of the federal poverty level. (A person with a disability may be treated as a family of one for the income calculation.) The income limits prepared annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can be found in Table A in section I of this Manual. In addition, section 204 explains how to compute income.

3. Place of Residence – Place of residence means an individual’s permanent dwelling place. To be eligible for enrollment an individual must reside in the county in which the project sponsor is authorized to operate an SSAI SCSEP. There is no requirement pertaining to the length of residence prior to enrollment.

4. Employment Status – Individuals must be unemployed or employed with notice of pending termination.

5. Durational Limit – as of July 1, 2011, individuals must not have exceeded their 48 month/4 year lifetime cap on SCSEP participation prior to enrollment. The four-year time limit is cumulative and includes any participation with any other SCSEP providers.

If a participant exits the program and wants to re-enroll, he or she must be eligible and re-enrollment is discretionary (see section 202-D Re-Enrollment Is at Sponsor’s Discretion).

Certain people must be given priority for participating in the SCSEP program – for example, veterans or qualified spouses of veterans must be given FIRST priority. For more information, see section 201 Enrollment Priorities.

B. Project Sponsor Responsible for Documenting Eligibility
Project sponsors are responsible for documenting eligibility and performance information and for recording that information on the SCSEP Participant Form. Acceptable sources of information must be used to document eligibility. For examples of acceptable sources, see “SSAI’s Data Validation Handbook” on the partners’ page of SSAI’s website at http://seniorserviceamerica.org.

If the applicant or participant would like to qualify as a family of one because of his or her disability, the disability must be documented. For information on acceptable types of source documentation for disability see “SSAI’s Data Validation Handbook.”
Project sponsors must retain original signed forms, eligibility documents, and income worksheets in the sponsor files. The **SSAI SCSEP Participant Form** is available on the partners’ page of SSAI’s website at [http://seniorserviceamerica.org](http://seniorserviceamerica.org).

**C. Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9) Required**

U.S. citizenship is not a requirement for eligibility; however, the Immigration and Naturalization Service requires an *Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9)* for every person hired after November 6, 1986.

**D. Durational Limit on Individual's Program Participation**

As a result of the 2006 Amendments to the Older Americans Act, SCSEP now has a maximum time period a participant may spend in the program. The maximum time period on SCSEP, otherwise known as the SCSEP Individual Durational Limit, is a total of 48 months or 4 years for any participant enrolled in the program on or after July 1, 2007. (The first date on which a participant could be exited by this new rule was July 1, 2011.)

**E. Individual Durational Limit Notification Requirements**

SCSEP Project Directors must notify all participants of the 48-month durational limit during initial orientation. SSAI requires project directors to send letters to participants approaching their four-year time limit 12 months before exit and again at 90 days before exit and again 30 days before exit. An example of the 12 months, 90-day and 30-day durational limit exit notice letters are available at the partners’ page of SSAI’s website at [http://seniorserviceamerica.org](http://seniorserviceamerica.org).

**F. Transition Assessment and IEP Requirements for Participants Approaching their IDL**

SSAI also requires project directors to develop and update Transition Assessments and IEPs for participants approaching their individual durational limit and provide transitional services minimally at the following intervals:

- Twelve months before the participant’s individual durational limit exit date, Project Director need to develop a Transition Assessment and IEP for the participant with a goal of self-sufficiency after termination from SCSEP and begin providing transitional services. Self-sufficiency goals can include: unsubsidized employment, financial literacy training and/or supportive services, or volunteer work for the participant when they are no longer served by SCSEP (for more information, see section 301-F Assessments Needed for Transition Assessment and IEP, and section 301-G Transition Assessment and IEP);

- Update the Transition Assessment and IEP 90 days before the participant’s individual durational limit exit date and continue to provide transitional services; and

- Update the Transition Assessment and IEP 30 days before the participant’s individual durational limit exit date and continue to provide transitional services.

- Participants must be exited on the date they reach their four years/48 months (see 603-F Termination for Reaching Durational Limit.)
G. **Felony Background Checks**
Background checks cannot be used as a basis for denying SCSEP eligibility. Thus, SSAI does not require sponsors to conduct felony background checks of participants, but does require sponsors to obey local laws and its own and host agencies’ policies. SSAI will monitor its subgrantees to ensure consistent application. If a subgrantee conducts felony background checks, all information collected will be maintained in a secure and confidential manner.

H. **Enrollment of More Than One Family Member Discouraged**
Project sponsors are strongly discouraged from enrolling more than one family member in their SSAI SCSEP.

I. **Recertification of Eligibility Required**
Project sponsors are required to certify each participant’s eligibility once every 12 months. Project sponsors also may verify eligibility as circumstances require. (For more information, see section 601 Recertification of Eligibility.)

J. **Income Limits for Eligibility**
Table A contains the income limits for participant eligibility; it reflects 125 percent of the poverty levels established annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Project sponsors cannot enroll anyone into SCSEP whose countable income exceeds the limits in this table. (For information on calculating countable income and number of people in a family, see section 204 Computing Income for eligibility.)
Table B reflects poverty limits used to determine whether an individual or family is at or below the poverty level for the District of Columbia and all states except Alaska and Hawaii as recorded on the SCSEP Participant Form, which is available in this manual’s Appendix II or on the partners’ page of SSAI’s website at http://seniorserviceamerica.org.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE A: SCSEP Income Eligibility 125 Percent of Poverty</th>
<th>TABLE B: Poverty Levels 100 Percent of Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number in Family</td>
<td>Annual Income Limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$15,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$21,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$27,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$32,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$38,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$43,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$49,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$55,150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For families of more than eight, add $5,600 for each additional member.

For families of more than eight, add $4,480 for each additional member.

**Source:** Office for the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services. These limits are retroactive to January 15, 2020.
204 Computing Income for Eligibility

A. Standards for Determining Number in Family and Countable Income
The definitions, methods of calculation and types of income to be counted set forth in this Policy must be used to determine eligibility for enrollment, or recertification in an SSAI project. (To compare calculated income with the income limit for an appropriately sized family, see section 203-I Income Limits for Eligibility.)

B. Definition of Family
For the purpose of determining income level for eligibility in SCSEP, family is when members live in the same household and is defined as:

- A husband, wife and dependent children who reside together; or
- A parent or guardian and dependent children who reside together; or
- A husband and wife who reside together.

Following the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court that the Defense Against Marriage Act (DOMA) was unconstitutional it is now the policy of DOL and SSAI both (a) to recognize all marriages (including same-sex marriages) that are lawfully entered in the state of celebration and (b) to recognize same-sex marriage even if the marriage is not recognized in the state where the married individual resides as long as the marriage could have been entered into in a state.

In addition, per DOL, SSAI requires its sponsors to recognize same-sex spouses within the definition of “family” above for income calculation/eligibility purposes.

For adult children (age 18 or older) who may be living with their parents, you would only include the adult child as part of the applicant’s family size if either (a) the child is claiming the parent(s) on his tax return as a dependent or (b) if the parent is claiming the child on their taxes as a dependent. You need to ask for the tax returns of both the applicant and the adult child in order to know.

A person with a disability may be treated as a “family of one” for income eligibility determination purposes but only if the applicant provides the required source documentation to validate their disability status. (Also see section 203-B Project Sponsor Responsible for Documenting Eligibility and see section 202-F SCSEP Family Size Form.)

C. Exception to Definition of Family
If the applicant is claimed as a dependent on the federal income tax return of another family member with whom they reside, then the family is defined as a group of two or more people related by birth, marriage or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related sub-family members) are considered as members of one family. Family is defined in section 204-B Definition of Family. There are several definitions of sub-family:

- **Sub-family.** A sub-family is a married couple with or without children, or one parent with one or more of their own never-married children less than 18 years old. A sub-family does not maintain its own household, but lives in the home of someone else.
• **Related sub-family.** A related sub-family is a married couple with or without children, or one parent with one or more of their never-married children less than 18 years old, living in a household and related to, but not including, the person or couple who maintains the household. One example of a related sub-family is a young married couple sharing the home of the husband’s or wife’s parents.

• **Unrelated sub-family.** An unrelated sub-family (formerly called a secondary family) is a married couple with or without children, or a single parent with one or more of their own never-married children under 18 years old living in a household. Unrelated sub-family members are not related to the householder. An unrelated sub-family may include such people as guests, partners, roommates or resident employees and their spouse and/or children. An unrelated sub-family is NOT included in the determination of income eligibility for SCSEP.

A person with a disability may be treated as a “family of one.”

**D. Method of Computing Income**

Annual family income and the income for a single individual must be computed by one of two methods. The method which is more beneficial to the applicant is to be used. Income that is to be counted is described in section 204-E Income to Be Counted, and section 204-F Income Not to Be Counted lists income that must not be counted. The two methods of computing countable family income are the following:

1. **Income Computation Method One:** Compute the actual countable income for the 12 months preceding the date of application.

2. **Income Computation Method Two:** Compute the actual countable income for six months preceding the date of application and then multiply by two (or annualize).

For example, if an individual in a family of two people applies on July 1 with countable income of $25,000 for the preceding 12 months – but only $4,000 of that $25,000 was countable in the six-month period before he or she applied – the individual would have an income of $25,000 using Method One but only $8,000 using Method Two (the $4,000 counted for the six months preceding the date of application multiplied by 2).

In this example, Method Two should be used because it is more beneficial to the participant (because the SCSEP annual income limit for a family of two people is $19,388, so the individual would not be income eligible if Method One were used).

**E. Look-Back Period for Income Calculation**

The look-back period for income eligibility ends on the date of application/recertification. This means that project staff looks back 6 or 12 months from the calendar date of participant’s application/recertification to determine the amount of income received. For example, if project staff uses the 6 month income computation approach to recertify a participant on March 20, staff must include all income received from September 21 of the prior calendar year to March 20 of the current calendar year. If project staff uses the 12 month income computation approach, project staff must include all income received on March 21 from the prior calendar year to March 20 of the current calendar year.
F. Income to Be Counted (for the Applicant/Participant and Includable Family Members)

The following types of income must be counted when determining eligibility:

1. Wages and Salary: total money earnings received for work performed as an employee during the year (includes wages, salary, armed forces pay, commissions, tips, piece-rate payments and cash bonuses, all before deductions for such items as income tax, bonds, pensions, health insurance, FICA, union dues, etc.); and gross wages received by each member of the family who is counted in the family.

2. Self-Employment Income: Count the net money income (gross receipts minus operating expenses) from a business firm, farm, rent or other enterprise in which a person is engaged.

3. Social Security: For all applicants and persons counted in the family, count 75 percent of the gross Social Security (reduce the gross amount by 25 percent).

4. Survivors’ Benefits: Count payments participants or applicants receive from survivors’ or widows’ pensions, estates, trusts, annuities or any other type of survivors’ benefits, including private companies or unions, federal government (civil service), military, state or local governments, railroad retirement, workers’ compensation, Black Lung payments, estates and trusts, annuities or paid-up insurance policies, and other survivors’ payments. If the applicant/participant receives a Social Security Survivor’s Benefit, you should treat this income like you do Social Security Retirement Income (see 204 F, #3 above) and include only 75% of the gross Social Security Survivor’s Benefit.

5. Pension or Retirement Income: Count payments that participants or applicants receive from private companies or unions, federal government (civil service), military, state or local governments, railroad retirement, annuities or paid-up insurance policies, individual retirement accounts (IRAs), Keogh or 401(k) payments, or other retirement income. If a participant makes an early withdrawal and pays a penalty, then, this is not retirement income because the participant is not yet qualified to receive the pension payment. In this case, the funds are treated like withdrawals from a savings account which is excluded income (see 204G #15).

6. Interest Income: Count payments participants or applicants receive (or have credited to accounts) from bonds, Treasury notes, IRAs, certificates of deposit, interest-bearing savings and checking accounts and all other investments that pay interest.

7. Dividends: Count income that participants or applicants receive from stock holdings and mutual fund shares. Do not count capital gains from the sale of stock holdings as income.

8. Rents, Royalties, Estates and Trusts: Count net income participants and applicants receive from the rental of a house, store or other property, receipts from boarders or lodgers, net royalty income, and periodic payments from estate or trust funds.

9. Educational Assistance: Count Pell grants, other governmental educational assistance, any scholarships or grants, or financial assistance participants and applicants receive from employers, friends or relatives not residing in the participant’s or applicant’s household. Educational assistance refers to scholarships and grants, as well as cash assistance provided directly to the applicant by friends or relative outside the applicant’s household. All loans/money borrowed is excluded income (see 204 G-15 below) as is all educational assistance to veterans (see 204 G-5 below).
10. Alimony: Count all periodic payments participants and applicants receive from ex-spouses. Alimony excludes one-time property settlements.

11. Financial Assistance from Outside the Household: Count periodic payments participants and applicants receive from non-household members. This type of assistance does not include gifts or sporadic assistance.

12. Other Income: Count all other payments participants and applicants receive regularly. Some examples are state programs such as military family allotments and income received from foreign government pensions.

G. Income Not to Be Counted (for Applicant/Participant and Includable Family Members)

The following types of income, goods or services cannot be counted in determining eligibility:

1. Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Do not count federal, state and local welfare agency payments to low-income people who are 65 years old and older or people of any age who are blind or have a disability.


3. Unemployment Compensation: Do not count payments a participant or applicant receives from government unemployment agencies or private companies during periods of unemployment and any strike benefits received from union funds.

4. Social Security: Do not count 25% of the gross Social Security received by the applicant and/or persons counted as part of the family.

5. Payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA): Do not count payments made to or on behalf of veterans or former members of the Armed Forces administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, including Veterans Compensation, Veterans Pension, and payments for education and on-the-job training. Military retirement payments administered by the Department of Defense Finance and Accounting Service is includable income (see Section 204-F, #5 for more information).

6. Public Assistance or Welfare Payments: Do not count such cash public assistance payments as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), general assistance and emergency assistance received by or on behalf of the individual whose eligibility is being determined.

7. Disability Benefits: With the exception of disability survivors’ benefits, do not count payments participants or applicants receive as a result of a health problem or disability. Do not count payments received from the following sources:
   - Workers’ compensation;
   - Private companies or unions;
   - Federal government (civil service);
   - Military;
   - State or local governments;
   - Railroad retirement;
   - Accident or disability insurance;
• Black lung payments;
• State temporary sickness; or
• All disability payments, including SSDI.

8. Income from Title V wages, such as from SCSEP or other Employment and Training Programs.

9. Child Support: Do not count child support payments or any other payments (i.e. Foster Care) that benefit the child including payments made by the government for the care of children such as Foster Care or adoption, grandparent’s subsidies.

10. Workers’ Compensation: Do not count payments participants or applicants receive periodically from public or private insurance companies for injuries received at work. Count if payments are survivors’ benefits.

11. Certain Payments to Native Americans: Do not count the first $2,000 of certain per capita fund distributions made to Native Americans pursuant to the Indian Claims Act, P.L. 93-134 and P.L. 97-458, Section 4.

12. Payment to Certain Volunteers: Do not count payments or stipends to volunteers under the National Community Service Trust Act of 1993 or similar legislation, including payments to VISTA volunteers, Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents (programs funded by the Senior Companions of the Corporation for National Community Service).

13. Sale of Property: Do not count capital gains people receive (or losses they incur) from the sale of property, including stocks, bonds, a house or a car (unless the person is engaged in the business of selling such property, in which case count the net proceeds as income from self-employment).

14. Reverse mortgage payments: Do not count reverse mortgage payments that people receive; they are considered as similar to capital gains and, thus, are excluded for SCSEP eligibility purposes.

15. Other Income: Do not count withdrawals from bank accounts, money borrowed or tax refunds. Do not count lottery winnings that are collected in one lump sum.

16. Inheritances and Insurance Payments: Do not count lump-sum inheritances and insurance payments from accident, health, disability, life or casualty insurance policies.

17. Disaster Unemployment Assistance: Do not count Disaster Unemployment Assistance received as a part of a National Emergency Grant.

H. Income Worksheet

Sponsors must use and retain a completed copy of an Income Worksheet for calculation of each participant’s income eligibility, whether at initial enrollment, recertification or re-enrollment, and data validation or source documents reviewed for each calculation in each participant’s file.

The SSAI Income Worksheet is available in this manual’s Appendix II or on the partners’ page of the SSAI’s website at http://seniorserviceamerica.org.

I. Participants Must Receive Payment

Participants are considered fully enrolled when they have been assigned a community service assignment and have either (a) attended at least one hour of orientation or (b) provided at least one hour of community service work. Once an applicant has been deemed eligible and assigned to a host agency, the sponsor must pay wages for time spent in orientation, training, assessment, or in receiving any other service.
This requirement applies even if the participant has yet to start his or her community service assignment at the host agency.

**J. SCSEP Wages Excluded from Federal Housing or Food Stamp Eligibility Determination**

Participants in SCSEP may not have funds they receive from the program considered as income when being considered for participation in housing or food programs under the Food Stamp Act of 1977.