



Title: 18 Mississippi Department of Human Services

Part 28: Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG) Policy Manual

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Revised: January 2026

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Part 28 Chapter 1: Introduction

The Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG) is administered by the Division of Community Services (DCS) at the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS). CSBG is designed to provide appropriate and timely assistance/referrals to eligible households to promote self-sufficiency. Information contained in this manual is in compliance with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, DCS regulations, and the CSBG state plan.

Rule 1.1 Legal Authority

CSBG is authorized by the Community Services Block Grant Act (under Title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, as amended.)

- A. Statute- Sections of the CSBG Act are listed below as amended. The CSBG Act is codified the United States Code at: 42 U.S.C. §9901.
- B. Regulations- The HHS regulations for the CSBG Act are found in Title 45 (Public Welfare) of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 96 (Block Grants).

Source: 45 CFR 96; Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 1.2 Program Purpose

The purpose of CSBG is “To provide assistance to States and local communities, working through a network of community action agencies and other neighborhood-based organizations, for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient.” The CSBG Act mandates certain aspects of how state CSBG offices will operate in carrying out their defined roles as administrators of CSBG but leaves significant authority and flexibility in the hands of the states. This responsibility, which is fulfilled by each state individually, can more easily be met when the state establishes clear policies and procedures for implementation of the Act.

- A. CSBG is offered in each of the 82 counties in Mississippi, pending the availability of funds. Income eligibility is set at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines. Client income eligibility will be updated annually as the federal poverty guidelines are revised and released.
- B. Subgrantees are required to refer households to internal agency programs and other local/state programs to meet the needs of the household.
- C. Program Operation Dates: CSBG is available year-round based on availability of funds.
- D. The State allocates ninety (90) percent of the total state allocation for program cost. Five (5) percent is allocated for discretionary funding which includes training and technical assistance. The remaining five (5) percent is used for state administrative cost.

Administrative cost refers to the cost of central executive functions that do not directly support a specific project or service. Administrative Cost are incurred for common objectives that benefit multiple programs administered by the organization and are not readily assignable to a particular funding stream.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: May 2022

Rule 1.3 Manual Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to provide program policy to clients, subgrantees and the public, in order to implement a range of services and activities having a measurable and potentially major impact on the causes of poverty in the State of Mississippi. This manual provides clear policies for implementing CSBG. Subgrantees must comply with the rules and guidelines set forth in this manual, and all applicable Federal and State laws, policies and procedures.

MDHS reserves the right to alter any policy during emergencies such as: natural disasters, pandemics, or other circumstances deemed appropriate by the DCS Director or the MDHS Executive Director.

Any questions regarding this policy should be submitted in writing to:

Mississippi Department of Human Services
Director, Division of Community Services
200 South Lamar Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39201

Source: 45 CFR 96.10; Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 1.4 Prior Policy Clause.

This policy replaces and supersedes all prior versions.

Rule 1.5 Non-Discrimination Statement

As a recipient of Federal financial assistance, MDHS and its subgrantees do not exclude, deny benefits to, or otherwise discriminate against any person on the basis of: race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability; in admission to participation in, or receipt of the services and benefits under any of its programs and activities, whether carried out by MDHS and/or its subgrantees directly or through a contractor or any other entity with which MDHS and/or its subgrantees arranges to carry out its programs and activities. This statement is in accordance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Regulations of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued pursuant to these statutes at Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 80, 84, and 91.

Source: 45 CFR 96.10; Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 1.6 Hatch Act

The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 specifically makes grantees subject to certain provisions of the Federal Hatch Act. CSBG funds may not be used in a manner involving the use of program funds, the provision of services, or the employment or assignment of personnel, in a manner supporting or resulting in the identification of such programs with:

- A. Any partisan or nonpartisan political activity or any political activity associated with a candidate, or contending faction or group, in an election for public or party office;
- B. Any activity to provide voters or prospective voters with transportation to the polls or similar assistance in connection with any such election; or
- C. Any voter registration activity.

Source: 45 CFR 96.10; Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 1.7 Organizational Structure of CSBG

The following summarizes the Organizational Structure for CSBG:

- A. MDHS as Lead Agency:

MDHS is the designated State agency to receive funds and administer the program covered in this manual. MDHS assists the Division of Community Services (DCS) by providing support services in a timely manner that is consistent with program goals, objectives and guidelines. MDHS awards CSBG subgrants based on the receipt of the Federal Notice of Award for CSBG, and the timely receipt and approval of subgrants for funding. MDHS is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the program performance of subgrants.

- B. Division of Community Services (DCS):

The Division of Community Services provides the necessary interface between the subgrantee and other divisions of MDHS. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Administering the program in accordance with all applicable federal and state rules, regulations and guidelines;
- 2) Informing the public of program rules, regulations, and guidelines through public hearings, announcements and publications;

- 3) Establishing criteria and processing subgrants for funding from subgrantees to implement programs;
- 4) Monitoring subgrantees' spending levels and processing claims requests to ensure compliance with Federal, State, and MDHS guidelines;
- 5) Reviewing subgrantees' subgrants for funding to ensure compliance with federal, state and MDHS guidelines;
- 6) Providing training and technical assistance to subgrantees;
- 7) Keeping subgrantees informed of changes in Federal, State and MDHS regulations and guidelines;
- 8) Providing responses to clients regarding inquiries concerning programs;
- 9) Preparing annual State Plan applications to receive the federal funds;
- 10) Collecting and disseminating information to appropriate funding sources and others as deemed necessary; and
- 11) Serving as a liaison between county, state, and federal agencies in regard to program implementation.

Source: 45 CFR 96.10; Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 1.8 Partner Roles in Administration of Program

CSBG must perform numerous federally mandated functions in order to remain compliant. MDHS enlists several partners through formal agreements to perform some of those functions. The following summarizes those roles:

A. Subgrantees/ Community Action Agencies (CAA):

The community action agencies are the subgrantees in the program. Each subgrantee is responsible for performing program activities in accordance with the terms and provisions of the grant. The responsibilities of the subgrantee include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Operate the program in accordance with the terms and provisions of the grant and all applicable federal and state rules, regulations and guidelines;
- 2) Process applications, determine eligibility and provide appropriate/timely service(s) with measurable outcomes;

- 3) Make referrals to and accept referrals from, and coordinate program information with other social service agencies;
- 4) Maintain all financial and program records;
- 5) Submit required reports to DCS in a timely manner;
- 6) Maintain administrative and internal controls;
- 7) Monitor its financial and programmatic activities;
- 8) Implement a fair hearing process for clients;
- 9) Cooperate with Federal/State investigating teams;
- 10) Establish emergency and disaster procedures;
- 11) Train and certify staff;
- 12) Use the Virtual ROMA system;
- 13) Have at least one intake site in each county of its service area with posted hours of operation;
- 14) Adhere to the terms of the “MDHS Subgrant/Agreement Manual.”
[\(https://www.mdhs.ms.gov/support/procurement/resources/\)](https://www.mdhs.ms.gov/support/procurement/resources/)
- 15) Establish partnerships with local entities and organizations to assist in the provision of services to meet the needs of the clients served. These partnerships should cover monetary or non-monetary services. Intra-office referrals should be made as most subgrantees have additional programs not funded by DCS (e.g., Head Start, Congregate Meals, Rural Housing Services and Transportation Program).
- 16) Make referrals to the WX agency that covers its service area on behalf of clients seeking WX services or have high energy bills.
- 17) Certify that all entities that are in partnership with the subgrantee are not on the list for debarment. This information can be found in the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS), now known as System for Award Management (SAM). Proof of documentation of partnership verification with SAM shall be kept on file and the debarment status shall be checked prior to submission of every subgrant and modification to DCS. The subgrantee must also understand that if the partnered agency is on the debarment list, the agreement should be terminated immediately.

- 18) Conduct local public hearings regarding the CSBG program. Information such as CSBG funding for the county, services provided, income guidelines, etc. must be presented in efforts to reach low-income communities.
- 19) Conducting outreach activities to reach eligible persons or households in need of services. Subgrantees may utilize the media (newspaper, TV, radio, flyers, internet, community meetings, etc.) to inform individuals of services available and eligibility requirements. Outreach materials should include the local and toll-free telephone numbers for subgrantee offices. Subgrantees should rely on their existing network of volunteers, community leaders, and faith-based groups to provide outreach to eligible persons in the greatest need of assistance.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Part 28 Chapter 2: Definitions

Rule 2.1 Definitions

The Definitions below will assist both clients and subgrantees on the various terms used for CSBG:

- A. Abuse - Involves behavior that is deficient or improper when compared with behavior that a prudent person would consider reasonable and necessary business practice given the facts and circumstances. Abuse also includes misuse of authority or position for personal financial interests or those of an immediate or close family member or business associate.
- B. Administration Cost - Cost to support administrative operations, planning and development to include but not limited to: Fiscal operations (payroll, procurement, software, etc.), program and fiscal reporting, audit, personnel, registration and dues, training for executive and administrative staff, cost of executive and administrative staff (salaries, fringes, travel, supplies, equipment), consultants, staff meeting cost, etc.
- C. Countable Income - Income that must be included when determining eligibility for CSBG.
- D. Current month (Rent or Mortgage)- Refers to the present month in which payment is due and has not yet been paid. Rent paid in the current month is typically “paid in advance” to secure housing for the upcoming month.
- E. Emergency - A natural disaster; a significant home energy supply shortage or disruption; a significant increase in the cost of home energy, as determined by the Secretary; a significant increase in home energy disconnections reported by a utility, a State regulatory agency, or another agency with necessary data; a significant increase in participation in a public benefit program such as the supplemental nutrition assistance program carried out under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.), the national program to provide supplemental security income carried out under title XVI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1381 et seq.), or the State temporary assistance for needy families program carried out under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), as determined by the head of the appropriate Federal agency; a significant increase in unemployment, layoffs, or the number of households with an individual applying for unemployment benefits, as determined by the Secretary of Labor; or an event meeting such criteria as the Secretary, in the discretion of the Secretary, may determine to be appropriate.
- F. Exempt income - Income that should not be included when determining eligibility for CSBG.
- G. Expenditures - Funds spent by subgrantees; Funds paid for services or contracts; and Funds paid at the State level to contracts and salaries.

- H. Fraud - A type of illegal act involving the obtaining of something of value through willful misrepresentation. A false representation of a material fact, whether by words or by conduct, by false or misleading allegations, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed, which deceives another so that he acts, or fails to act to his detriment.
- I. Unobligated funds- Funds that are not considered obligated or expended include: State administrative dollars that do not fall within the definition stated above; Vendor refunds are considered unobligated; and Funds transferred from one subgrantee to another are considered unobligated until funds are awarded in another subgrant.
- J. Household - Any individual or group of individuals who are living together as one economic unit for whom residential energy is customarily purchased.
- K. Income - Income is money received on a regular and recurring basis by any household member. Income may be earned or unearned.
- L. Line Items - Line Items for CSBG as specified in the MDHS Subgrantee Manual are: Salaries, Fringes, Travel, Equipment, Contractual Services, Supplies, & Subsidies, Loans & Grants.
- M. New Client- is a client that has never received assistance from a DCS funded subgrantee within the last three (3) years from the date of the last service.
- N. Natural disaster - A weather event (relating to cold or hot weather), flood, earthquake, tornado, hurricane, or ice storm, or an event meeting such other criteria as the Secretary may determine to be appropriate.
- O. Obligations - Amounts which may be legally required to pay out of its resources, including encumbrances, as well as accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Obligations may include: any funds issued in the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA); any funds encumbered in a contract; and any funds committed to State Office FTEs. This does not include vacant positions.
- P. Poverty level - With respect to a household in any State, the income poverty line as prescribed and revised at least annually pursuant to section 9902(2) of this title, as applicable to such State.
- Q. Secretary - The Secretary of Health and Human Services.
- R. State - Each of the several States and the District of Columbia.
- S. State median income - The State median income promulgated by the Secretary in accordance with procedures established under section 1397a(a)(6) of this title (as such procedures were in effect on August 12, 1981) and adjusted, in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary, to take into account the number of individuals in the household.

T. Waste - Involves the taxpayers not receiving reasonable value for money in connection with any government funded activities due to an inappropriate act or omission by players with control over or access to government resources.

* Clients and applicants may be used interchangeably throughout the policy.

* Subgrantee, Agency and Community Action Agency (CAA) may be used interchangeably throughout the policy.

* Application and Intake may be used interchangeably throughout the policy.

Source: 45 CFR 96; Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Part 28 Chapter 3: Appointments

Rule 3.1 Appointments

- A. The process by which appointments are given shall be determined by the subgrantee (i.e. mornings, days of the week, caseworker to be assigned to this population, etc). If a client is physically disabled and cannot come to the subgrantee, a caseworker can conduct a home visit to take the application, or the client can authorize someone to make an application on their behalf.
- B. Appointments for a new client should be made on a first-come, first-served basis. Existing client appointments should be made 30 days after their current case in waiting on approval or according to case plan or when a non-availability of funds waitlist opens up.
- C. Applicants arriving within 15 minutes of appointment time shall be seen according to scheduled appointment. Applicants who arrive later than 15 minutes for a scheduled appointment may have to wait to be seen depending on the time of the caseworkers next scheduled appointment; or be rescheduled for the next available appointment if the applicant cannot be worked into schedule for that day. The Subgrantee should make every effort to see the applicant that day if possible.
- D. If the subgrantee has a no-show or a cancellation after the 15-minute grace period, applicants waiting for an appointment shall be seen immediately. The Subgrantee may then re-arrange their schedule to accommodate other applicants.
- E. If the client misses the appointment, no further benefits can be given until the client comes in for another appointment to have eligibility determined.
- F. The client should be advised at the time of appointment of the responsibility to report household changes within ten (10) days. Changes can be reported by mail, phone call, email, or office visit.
- G. All contact with the client must be documented in Virtual ROMA. Changes may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1) Increase or decrease in household members,
 - 2) Increase or decrease in household income,
 - 3) Household moved, or
 - 4) Changes to case plan.

H. Significant changes in staffing that may impact a client’s appointment for services (i.e. office closure due to staff being sick, on vacation or not having a person to cover county) must be communicated via a signed letter by the Board Chair to DCS.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026*

Part 28 Chapter 4: Client Application Process

The State has one application for three programs- CSBG, LIHEAP, and Weatherization. Therefore, an applicant may apply for all programs during the intake process. If the weatherization agency is different from the CSBG agency, the CSBG agency will determine eligibility and then refer the file over to the weatherization agency to complete the assessment. Agencies should offer the client any additional programs administered by that agency. Additionally, agencies should refer applicants to other local programs such as SNAP and TANF, if the applicant is not currently receiving these services.

Rule 4.1 Client Application Process

The Subgrantees/ Community Action Agencies (CAAs) accept applications throughout the year. When funding is available. When funding is not available, clients should still be scheduled for an appointment but denied based on “Grant Award Fully Expended”.

- A. As a general rule, only the applicant, spouse of the applicant, or authorized representative of a disabled or elderly applicant are the adults who can be present during the application. The Subgrantee reserves the right to require other adults to remain in the waiting room, especially if the individuals are causing disruption during the application process.
- B. If the applicant cannot read, the caseworker must read all forms/declarations to the applicant to ensure the applicant understands what is being signed.
- C. The signature of the applicant must be on all applicable documents. A spouse may sign if the head of household is absent. The caseworker should document the reason the head of the household cannot come in for appointment. If the applicant cannot write, the applicant may sign by making an “X” on the signature line. The name must be printed or typed under the “X” by the caseworker, and a witness should sign under the “X”.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 4.2 Rule Before Initiating Application

- A. Applications are initiated through the Common Web Portal (CWP) for all first-time applicants. If an applicant was a previous household member in another case, but is now head of household, a new pre-application must be completed. Pre-applications are web-based and may be submitted on behalf of Mississippi residents only. Applicants may apply for services through the CWP at: www.access.ms.gov
- B. Pre-applications are required for applicants requesting service for the first time or if the applicant is no longer in the household of another client.
- C. Applicants submitting pre-applications should receive notification of an appointment for services within fifteen (15) business days of submission of the application.

- 1) If the applicant is elderly, disabled, or a family with a child five (5) and under, the appointment date must be within thirty (30) business days. Non-elderly or non-disabled clients must be given an appointment date within forty-five (45) business days.
- D. If an applicant does not have access to a computer to submit a pre-application, the subgrantee must complete the pre-application by phone or at the intake appointment.
 - E. Caseworkers must inform applicants at intake that another pre-application does not need to be completed.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 4.3 Initiating Application

- A. Subgrantees must receive the pre-application from Virtual ROMA and schedule the applicant an appointment. Appointments booked in IT Front Desk or other scheduling system must be entered in Virtual ROMA daily. (Please view the Virtual ROMA policy manual on scheduling appointments)
- B. If an applicant does not complete a pre-application (regardless of reason), the subgrantee must complete the pre-application during the application process. A manual appointment must be made for the applicant by the subgrantee and the appointment should be documented in Virtual ROMA after the pre-application has been completed.
- C. Under no circumstance should an applicant be denied services because the applicant has not completed a pre-application. The subgrantee must assist the applicant with completing a pre-application.
- D. Paper Applications are prohibited, unless in case of a computer system failure or natural/manmade disasters. The subgrantee's Executive Director or appointee must submit a request in writing to the Director of the Division of Community Services for approval to take paper applications. Once the emergency is over, the paper applications must be entered into Virtual ROMA within two (2) business days, unless additional time is requested and approved. The subgrantee's Executive Director must submit a letter to confirm all paper applications have been entered. Otherwise, any paper applications taken may result in questioned or disallowed cost.
- E. The caseworker must complete the application in the Virtual ROMA system. If the applicant submits the requested information, the caseworker must give the applicant a Pending Notification of Services form (PNOS) which states the status of the application and amount of benefits the applicant may receive upon supervisory approval. This form must be generated through Virtual ROMA and signed and dated by both the applicant and caseworker. Subgrantees must provide the PNOS notice (written or email) to applicants regarding the status of their application within seventy-two (72) hours of the appointment date.

- F. If the applicant does not have all the required documentation, the caseworker must complete as many screens as possible up to the allocation screen in Virtual ROMA. The caseworker will not allocate after this point. A Request for Additional Information (RAFI) form must be generated through Virtual ROMA and signed and dated by both the applicant and the case worker. A copy must be given to the applicant, and a follow-up appointment must be given to complete the application process if necessary. Applicants may submit their information electronically; therefore, the subgrantee must provide an email address to the applicant. If the applicant does not return the information timely, the application must be denied, and the denial notice, and Notification of Services (NOS) form should be sent by mail or email by the case worker and uploaded to Virtual ROMA. The caseworker must explain the documentation needed and the 10-calendar day timeframe to return the information.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 4.4 After Submitting Application

- A. Once application is initiated, the client’s application status must change to ‘Waiting on Approval’ within ten (10) business days. Then the application must be acted upon and changed to ‘Approved’ or ‘Denied’ within two (2) business days.
- B. If the supervisor sends a case back to the caseworker for Return for Correction (RFC), the caseworker will have two (2) business days to correct case and put back in “Waiting on Approval” status.
- 1) Any application placed in Return for Corrections (RFC) status must be addressed within two (2) business days. If no corrective action is taken within this timeframe, the RFC will be automatically voided by the system.
- C. If an application is not acted upon in two (2) business days and it is negligence of the agency and the application is over 30 days, the client should not have to come back for another appointment. The agency must pay for services out of nonfederal funds.
- D. The subgrantee’s cancellation of applications approved in error must occur within twenty-four (24) hours after an application has been approved. The subgrantee must contact the vendor to notify them of non-approval status to prevent inaccurate payment. After (24) hours, the agency’s Executive Director must submit a request on letterhead to Virtual ROMA via the concerns dashboard.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 4.5 Notices from Subgrantee to Applicant

- A. Notification of an appointment for services must be generated through Virtual ROMA and either mailed, emailed, or given to applicant in the office within fifteen (15)

business days of the submission of a pre-application. A copy of the notification of an appointment for services must be scanned into Virtual ROMA

1) The notification must include the following:

- i Name, address, phone number, and email address of Subgrantee office
- ii Date and time of appointment
- iii Eligibility information needed, as listed in Chapter 5.

B. The Notification of Services form must be provided to the applicant either by letter or email within seventy-two (72) hours of the approval or denial of the application. This form must be scanned into Virtual ROMA and a copy placed in the applicant's file.

C. A copy of the fair hearing process must be given to all applicants at each appointment, regardless of the approval or denial status. The fair hearing process must be posted in the lobby so the process can be seen by the public.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026*

Rule 4.6 Non-Availability of Funds/ Waitlist

A. If the Subgrantee has run out of CSBG funds, the application must still be taken and denied. When denying the case, the reviewer must select "Grant Award Fully Expended" as the denial code. If denied, the applicant should be referred to other local organizations that may be able to assist. All referrals must be documented in Virtual ROMA. As soon as funding is available, the applicants who were denied for this reason should be given an appointment before any other appointments are made.

B. Under no circumstance should an applicant not be allowed to apply because CSBG funds are not available.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026*

Part 28 Chapter 5: Client Eligibility Requirements

Households that meet the requirements of the program will be eligible for assistance.

Rule 5.1 Eligibility Requirements

An applicant must meet the following requirements to receive a CSBG benefit:

- A. Have an obligation to pay a bill directly to a vendor;
- B. Be a U.S. citizen or have legal permanent resident status;
- C. Have income at or below the 125% of the federal poverty guidelines; and
- D. Be eighteen (18) years of age or older or an emancipated minor (through court action) who is considered head of household;
- E. Have a verifiable need, such as but not limited to:
 - 1) Unexpected expense such as death of an immediate family member, funeral expenses, high medical expenses, etc;
 - 2) Income loss within the last thirty (30) days (of the date the subgrantee was contacted) due to layoffs or termination of benefits;
 - 3) Head of Household and/or household member seeking employment, living wage or higher and seeking career advancement;
 - 4) Head of Household and/or household member seeking educational assistance;
 - 5) Facing homelessness, eviction or home foreclosure. (Rental or mortgage statement must be in head of household or spouse);
 - 6) Theft;
 - 7) Displacement of a minor child (under the age of 18) due to the client's inability to pay utilities, rent, etc.; and/or
 - 8) Other eligible service need (see Rule 5.5);
 - 9) Other documented emergencies within the last thirty (30) days, as deemed acceptable by the subgrantee.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: March 2024

Rule 5.2 Residency

An applicant must be a resident of the State of Mississippi and reside in the CSBG service area at the time the costs were incurred. The applicant must apply for services in the county in which the applicant lives.

- A. An applicant must give a street address to include a house/route number and street name, city, state, and zip code.
- B. CSBG services cannot be provided to temporary residents defined as:
 - 1) Household traveling through the state;
 - 2) Household on vacation;
 - 3) Household visiting someone; or
- C. A household with an address that straddles county lines may provide proof of Homestead Exemption, which verifies the county of residency. Another method of verifying county residence for an applicant who is not eligible for Homestead Exemption, is Voter Registration I.D. or documentation of the county in which the applicant receives other social services benefits. The subgrantee can also verify by using the internet in determining what county the applicant lives.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 5.3 Immigration Status

- A. If the head of household is undocumented and is a single member of the household, the application must be denied.
- B. If the head of household is undocumented and has documented member(s) in the household, the application shall not be denied for the entire household. The application must be determined eligible by using the household size of the documented household members and the income for all household members eighteen (18) years of age and older.
- C. If an individual within the household is undocumented and does not disclose citizenship or establish satisfactory immigration status, ineligibility exists only for the individual, but not the entire household. This individual is considered a “non-applicant” and should not be questioned about citizenship/alien status. However, this individual must disclose and verify income and other information needed to establish the eligibility of the household. The income of this individual must be included in determining the household’s total income; however, this individual will not be counted in determining the household size.
- D. Eligibility cannot be determined when a “non-applicant” fails to disclose income; therefore, the application should be denied for the entire household.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 5.4 Renters/Homeowners

The State of Mississippi treats homeowners and renters equitably under the CSBG program. Eligibility requirements are the same for a renter as with a homeowner.

- A. The renter must provide current copy of their lease agreement. A Landlord Verification Form can only be submitted when the client is trying to establish housing. The Landlord Verification form must be notarized.
- B. CSBG funds must be used to pay the current month's* rent/mortgage, one month past due rent/mortgage and any applicable fees to prevent the applicant from facing eviction or foreclosure, pending availability of funds, alleviation of crisis and committal to case management. The applicant must provide an itemized statement (ledger or invoice) from their apartment complex or mortgage company confirming the charges owed. This statement must be on their letterhead with the applicant's name, address, account number (renters only), and date. Copies must be scanned into Virtual ROMA and a copy placed in their hard copy file. Applicants requesting CSBG assistance for future months must comply with case management plan.

*Refer to Rule 2.1.D for definition

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 5.5 Roomers/Boarders

A roomer/boarder is an individual who is not a related household member and is paying an unrelated landlord to reside in their residence.

- A. The roomer/boarder must obtain written verification from the landlord or the Landlord Verification Form to verify rent amount.
- B. If the landlord is an individual who rents the single home or property from a vendor, the payment must be sent to the vendor of whom the landlord pays their rent.
- C. If the landlord is an individual who owns the single home or property, the payment must be sent to the landlord listed in the lease agreement or Landlord Verification Form.
- D. If the applicant has a roommate listed on the lease and is responsible for a certain portion of the rent, notarized statement can be obtained from the roommate to confirm the amount of the applicant's rent.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 5.6 College Students

- A. CSBG funds can be used to assist an applicant with tuition costs at a college/university. To be eligible the applicant must complete the following:
- 1) The applicant must be enrolled at least part-time (minimum of 6 hours) in a college/university.
 - 2) The applicant must be enrolled in an undergraduate/vocational program.
 - 3) The applicant must agree to report their grades twice per semester (mid-terms and finals).
 - 4) Maintain a “C average” (2.0) overall grade point average.
 - 5) Comply with case management goals given by the Subgrantee.
- B. Before CSBG assistance is provided, the agency must confirm that all available resources (Grants, Scholarships, etc.) have been denied, used, or exhausted before assistance is provided. Documentation of denied or exhausted resources must be uploaded into Virtual ROMA and a copy placed in their hard copy file.
- C. If an applicant is ineligible for any federal tuition assistance, or federal assistance did not cover the full cost of tuition the agency can approve the applicant up to \$2,500 maximum per calendar year for tuition, books, lab fees, and technology fees.
- 1) The subgrantee should reach out to the college/university to make payment arrangements for tuition assistance. To prevent misuse of funds, the subgrantee will pay $\frac{1}{2}$ of the applicant’s tuition at the beginning of the first nine (9) weeks and the other $\frac{1}{2}$ at the beginning of the second nine (9) weeks if all qualifications are met. For example, up to \$1,250 may be paid at the beginning of the Fall semester. After determining if all qualifications are met by the applicant, the second payment up to \$1,250 may be paid at the beginning of the next nine (9) week period.
 - 2) If college/university is unable to make payment arrangements, the subgrantee can still pay up to \$2,500 maximum at the beginning of the semester, but the applicant must still comply with their case plan and minimum requirements to receive further assistance.
- D. The subgrantee should make applicants aware that if the applicant does not comply with case management or fails to meet the requirements for assistance, further assistance cannot be provided, and the applicant will be financially responsible for the balance owed.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 5.7 Hardships

If an applicant is facing a **temporary** hardship (i.e. maternity leave, worker's comp, medical leave due to an ongoing illness, etc.), the applicant may receive assistance if qualified; however, there will be stipulations.

- A. The subgrantee must obtain a statement on official letterhead that confirms the timeframe of how long the hardship will last and the subgrantee must contact the company to confirm accuracy for further clarification.
- B. The subgrantee will pay the amount of the bill, including any late or miscellaneous fees, for that month and schedule the applicant an appointment for next month if further assistance is needed.
- C. Appointments must be completed in-person, and it is the agency's responsibility to make sure all required documents are signed and dated. If an illness prevents the applicant from coming to the office, a representative can come in on the applicant's behalf if the applicant has signed an Authorized Representative Form.
- D. Case management will still be required for these applicants and if case management is declined, further CSBG assistance **cannot** be provided during the time of their hardship.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 5.8 Employee Familial and/or Personal Interest Applicants

Any employee, relative, or personal interest cases of employees or board members may apply for and receive assistance; however, there are policies and procedures for taking and processing these applications. No preferential treatment shall be granted to these applicants.

- A. An employee of a Subgrantee cannot complete the intake or be involved in the approval process of a relative. In this case, the caseworker should immediately recuse oneself from any involvement with the case.
- B. The Program Director/Supervisor is responsible for delegating the processing of applications for employees, relatives of employees, or personal interest cases and for submitting the case to the Executive Director for review and authorization of the approval or denial. The Executive Director is responsible for delegating the processing of Program Directors/Supervisors, Board Members, and/or their relatives requesting assistance. The Executive Director is responsible for approving the application of the Program Directors/Supervisors, Board Members, and their relatives.
- C. The relatives for whom the special procedures must be used include: employee's spouse, ex-spouse, parent(s), stepparent(s), grandparent(s), great and great-great grandparent(s), brother(s) and sister(s), stepbrother(s) and stepsister(s), half-brother(s) and half-sister(s), children, stepchildren, grandchildren, great and great-great grandchildren, aunt(s),

uncles(s), nieces(s), nephew(s), first and second cousin(s), or these relatives of an employee's spouse who are related to this degree of marriage.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 5.9 Eligibility Documentation

Applicants must verify eligibility through the submission of documents. The following is a list of acceptable proof for each requirement:

A. Social Security Cards are required for all household members. **Cards must be legible.**

- 1) If the applicant is applying for assistance for the first time and cannot provide their Social Security Card, a printout from the Social Security office is acceptable.
- 2) The requirement to present a social security card is waived for foster children. The applicant must provide a social security number to apply for services. A letter or some documentation from Child Protective Services (CPS) is needed to verify the social security number.
- 3) For families where custody has been granted for children and Social Security Card is not available, if a social security number has been verified by another MDHS program or governmental agency documentation can be accepted. For subsequent services a physical card should be presented. Agency can assist in helping apply for card.
- 4) For newborns (less than 8 weeks old) who do not have a Social Security Card, the application can be processed without adding the child, but any income for the child must be counted when determining household income.
- 5) **Subgrantees shall no longer keep copies of Social Security cards and Personal Identifiable Information (PII) documentation in clients' files. These documents must be scanned into the Virtual ROMA system only and given back to the client.**

B. Photo Identification Documentation

- 1) A photo I.D. is required for all household members eighteen (18) years of age and over. Acceptable documents include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Driver's license
 - ii. State-issued I.D.
 - iii. Passport
 - iv. Military I.D.
 - v. Employment I.D.
 - vi. College/School I.D.

- vii. Tribal I.D.
 - viii. Alien: Photo I.D. plus Alien Registration/Permanent Resident Card
 - ix. Temporary Resident Card
 - x. Voter Registration I.D. with photo
- 2) An applicant shall receive services even if an expired photo I.D is presented. However, the picture should be clear. The subgrantee should work with the applicant through case management or referral to obtain a valid I.D.

Please do not take pictures of elderly/disabled/homebound clients in lieu of photo I.D.

- 3) For applicants with a person in their household that has a disability that hinders them from getting a photo I.D., an affidavit is acceptable as an alternative to a photo I.D.

C. Bill to be Paid

- 1) Applicant must present the current or past due bill to be paid.
- 2) The bill must be in the name of the head of household or spouse. In certain domains, as in employment & education, the bill can be in the name of a child.
- 3) If the bill is in the name of a deceased, incarcerated, divorced, or estranged spouse, the subgrantee can pay the bill if official documentation has been provided by the applicant to prove living and/or marital status. Written statements may be provided for confirmation; however, any documentation provided must be notarized and verified by the Subgrantee.
- 4) If the bill is in the landlord's name and the applicant is responsible for paying the bill directly to a vendor, documentation is needed to verify the tenant's living status. This documentation can be a notarized statement from the landlord, a copy of the lease agreement stating the arrangement, or a Landlord Verification form can be completed by the landlord. The landlord cannot request services on behalf of the tenant/client.
- 5) Any fees resulting from damage to property or illegal fees cannot be paid with CSBG funds.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 5.10 Authorization of Release of Information

Applicant should sign the "Authorization of Release of Information Form" (Form ARF-001) to authorize the subgrantee the authority to share their information with an established partner or contact other entities on the applicant's behalf for the purpose of case management as needed.

Rule 5.11 Affidavits

Affidavits are written declarations made under oath before a notary public or other authorized officer. Agencies should have a staff member who is a notary, and clients should not be charged. Affidavits are valid for thirty (30) days. An affidavit is not needed if there is a court order. Affidavits are to be obtained for the following reasons:

- A. Authorized Representative applying for services on behalf of an applicant: The representative must have an affidavit giving authority to act on behalf of the applicant. Original copies of documents required for eligibility must be presented. If the representative has a Power of Attorney, an affidavit is not required. The Power of Attorney must be scanned into Virtual ROMA.

For a person who is bedridden or homebound and unable to sign the form, a doctor's statement is acceptable as an alternative to an affidavit.

- B. Separation: The State of Mississippi does not recognize legal separation. Applicants must obtain an affidavit which declares separation from the spouse.
- C. Zero income household: Applicant must obtain an affidavit when declaring zero income for the entire household.
- D. Unemployed: For each adult (18 years of age and older) that lives in the household, has no income and is not a student, an affidavit must be obtained confirming unemployment status for thirty (30) days. For students over the age of 18, school verification must be provided.
- E. Guardianship: If the applicant reports having guardianship over any minors (grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc.) in the home, an affidavit **MUST** be completed **AND** the applicant must obtain official documentation from a verifiable agency/source (CPS, attorney offices, school records, etc.) to confirm residency status of the child.
- F. Other: This option should be used if there are any circumstances where the subgrantee feels an affidavit is required. This must be utilized only in Emergency Situations.

Rule 5.12 Income Eligibility and Calculations.

- A. Income is money received on a regular and recurring basis by any household member. Income may be earned or unearned.

- B. A household's total gross income shall be used to determine eligibility. The total gross income received for the thirty (30) days prior to application date must be verified.
- C. Countable Income is income (earned or unearned) that must be included when determining eligibility. The following types of income shall be used:
- 1) Salaries and wages, including overtime, tips, bonuses, commission, and 13th check;
 - 2) Self-employment income;
 - 3) Contract income;
 - 4) Unemployment insurance;
 - 5) Social Security benefits (including Medicare deduction);
 - 6) SSI;
 - 7) SSDI;
 - 8) Retirement benefits;
 - 9) Alimony;
 - 10) VA benefits;
 - 11) Workers' Compensation;
 - 12) Private Disability (Short/Long Term Disability);
 - 13) Money given to household; and
 - 14) Any income whereas a W2 or 1099 is not received or otherwise documented.
- D. Exempt income is income that should not be included when determining eligibility. The following types of income shall not be considered:
- 1) Loans/Grants;
 - 2) In-kind income;
 - 3) Earnings from employment of a child under the age of 18, unless emancipated;
 - 4) Infrequent income- if an individual receives it only once during a calendar year from a single source and the individual did not receive that type of income in the month immediately before that month or in the month immediately following that month (Examples of this would also be repayment of personal loans, etc.);
 - 5) Reimbursement for business or medical expenses;
 - 6) Payments made by others on behalf of household, unless payments were directly received by household;
 - 7) Benefits received that must be excluded by federal law or incentives paid by TANF or Workforce Investment, earnings and allowances paid under Title IV-A, benefits received under Title VII, HUD, and educational grants;
 - 8) Child support;

- 9) Payments made to the household for the care of a foster child;
 - 10) Adoption assistance payments; and
 - 11) Refunds such as energy refunds, income tax refunds and EITC, insurance refunds, etc.
- E. Earned income is income that is received from wages or self-employment income and shall be used in determining eligibility. Computation of the monthly income shall be done by one (1) of the following methods, depending upon the frequency:

1) Regular Income- Frequency does not change from week to week, or month to month.

- i. Weekly: The four most recent consecutive paycheck stubs covering the four-week period prior to application, or the signed/dated statement from the employer.

To calculate: Sum the weekly gross earnings; Divide by 4, then multiply by 4.3333 to determine the monthly amount. Multiply the monthly amount by 12 to get the annual income.

Example: WK1 through WK4: $(\$412 + 436 + 485 + 520) / 4 * 4.333 * 12$ Monthly: $\$2,007.26 * 12 =$ Annual income: $\$24,087.15$

- ii. Semi-Monthly (Twice a month): The two most recent consecutive paycheck stubs covering the month prior to application. Individuals receive checks 24 times a year.

To calculate: Sum the gross amounts of two checks, multiply by 12 to get the annual income.

Example: Check for first 2 weeks- $\$1,500$ and Check for second 2 weeks- $\$1,700$. $(1,500 + 1,700) = 3,200$ monthly. $3,200 * 12 =$ Annual income: $\$38,400$

- iii. Bi-Weekly (Paid every other week): The two most recent paycheck stubs covering a month prior to application. Individuals receive checks 26 times a year.

To calculate: Sum the gross amounts of two (2) checks and divide by 2 to get an average. Multiply by 2.1667 to get the monthly income. Multiply by 12 to get the annual income.

Example: Check for the first 2 weeks- $\$1,000$ and Check for the second 2 weeks- $\$1,200$. $(1,000 + 1,200) / 2 = 1,100$. Next-

$1,000 * 2.1667 = 2,383.37$ months. Next- $2,383.37 * 12 =$ Annual income: \$28,600.44

iv. Monthly: The most recent paycheck stub.

To calculate: Multiply the gross amount by 12 to get annual income.

Example: $\$900 * 12 =$ Annual income: \$10,800

F. Unearned Income - is all income that is not earned. Unearned income shall be used in determining eligibility. Some common examples are:

- 1) Money and Inheritances given to an individual. A contribution statement is required,
- 2) Private pensions and annuities,
- 3) Payments such as Social Security benefits, Railroad Retirement benefits, Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, civil service annuities, workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, retirement benefits, and payments based on need involving federal funds,
- 4) Life insurance proceeds and other death benefits, to the extent that the total amount is more than the expenses of the deceased person's last illness and burial, and other debts paid by the individual,
- 5) Support (not child support) and alimony payments in cash,
- 6) Prizes, awards and winnings,
- 7) Dividends and interest,
- 8) Rents and royalties (except those defined as earned income),
- 9) Certain payments not considered wages for Social Security purposes,
- 10) In-kind payments to certain agricultural workers,
- 11) Jury fees, and/or

G. Inconsistent Income - frequency varies from week to week, or from month to month due to hours worked. It is considered to be received regularly if an individual can reasonably expect to receive it. Calculation of this income should follow the policy of regular

income. Occupations that may fit this description are horticulturist, woodcutter, or substitute teacher, and Gig economy (i.e. ride-share services, food or package delivery, sale of crafts and handmade items, etc.).

H. Seasonal Income – income that is regularly received for only part of the year. Calculation of this income should follow the policy of regular income.

I. Self-Employment Income – If an applicant is self-employed, a copy of the past year’s federal income tax return (to include Schedule C), purchase and sales receipt, or accounting books must be used to establish the source and amount of income.

- 1) The amount to be used in determining eligibility will be the net income available after deduction of business expenses. Subgrantee should include the amount on the Net Profit or (Loss) line from the Schedule C (Form 1040) Profit or Loss from Business (sole proprietorship), divided by 12.
- 2) If it is proven that a self-employed applicant’s current situation has substantially changed in either size or type of operation from the previous year, the current income should be used. Example: A farmer farmed 40 acres in 2017, but because of ill health did not plant a crop in 2018. The income earned in 2017 should not be considered. The farmer should be considered to have zero income.
- 3) If the applicant cannot provide the above items, a notarized statement of income must be provided.

J. Income of Minors

- 1) Earned Income – A minor’s (under 18 years of age) income is excluded in the determination of income eligibility.
- 2) Unearned Income - A minor who receives unearned income such as Social Security or SSI must be included and is listed under the parent or legal guardian in the household.

K. A **zero-income household** is one in which the applicant reports no income is being received by any household members. the subgrantee must confirm additional information from the applicant:

- 1) The applicant must verify how household bills and personal expenses are being paid for. If applicant is receiving money or in-kind assistance from someone, a Contribution Statement Form must be completed and notarized. Money given to the household must be counted as unearned income. If the person pays the bills directly to the vendor, this is not included as unearned income.

- 2) Households may report zero income because of a recent layoff, medical issues, or other events that have occurred within the last 30 days. Documentation shall be submitted to verify the event, and an affidavit signed by the applicant to declare unemployment or zero-income status. Layoff documentation must be on the employer's letterhead and state the date of the layoff.

- 3) If a household has an open case with Social Security for disability determination, the applicant must show evidence of disability case pending, and present documentation from a medical physician stating the applicant is unable to work. The applicant may be referred to the local Ability to Work office to get an assessment if the applicant has been waiting on a disability determination from Social Security for more than one (1) year. The applicant should return the Residual Functional Capacity Assessment from the Ability to Work office to the subgrantee.

Source: Miss. *Code Ann.* § 43-1-2(4); Miss. *Code Ann.* § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Part 28 Chapter 6: Program Process and Procedures

Rule 6.1 Walk-ins

- A. Walk-ins are discouraged. Applicants should schedule an appointment for services.
- B. An applicant shall not be denied an appointment because of inappropriate attire.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 6.2 Transfers

- A. There are two types of client transfers:
 - 1) Intra-agency transfers occur when a client's file is reassigned within an agency. A person with Virtual ROMA agency administration rights can make the reassignment internally without DCS intervention.
 - 2) Inter-agency transfers occur when clients require services but the agency that last provided services does not provide the requested service. For instance, a client may seek weatherization services from an agency that only administers CSBG/LIHEAP. The requesting agency must contact the point of contact of the agency that has ownership to release the file. The agency that has ownership of the client's record must authorize release of the client to the requesting agency via "Concerns" in Virtual ROMA.
- B. Timely transfers are required to avoid any disruptions in client services. If there is an outstanding request for approval, it must be resolved before a transfer can be done. Transfers **must** occur with twenty-four (24) hours of the request.
- C. No household members shall be approved as part of another household during a 30-day period. Emergency situations should be supported with appropriate documentation.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 6.3 Virtual ROMA

CSBG subgrantees shall be Virtual ROMA compliant. This compliance includes, but is not limited to:

- A. Every user of the Virtual ROMA system must be registered upon authorization by the subgrantee Executive Director.
- B. Users must agree to the terms and conditions of the use of Virtual ROMA by signing the

‘Confidentiality Statement’ and returning to DCS.

- C. Users are prohibited from sharing user IDs and passwords.
- D. Users are prohibited from scheduling client appointments outside of Virtual ROMA, except in the case of disasters. The subgrantee’s Executive Director shall request in writing and receive approval from DCS in this case.
- E. Subgrantees must ensure that every application for service originates through Virtual ROMA. In the event Virtual ROMA is not available, such as natural disaster, system outage, etc., upon approval by DCS Director, paper applications may be taken. The paper applications shall be entered into Virtual ROMA within two (2) business days of system availability.
- F. Subgrantees generate the electronic GET/PUT files weekly to submit claim forms.
- G. Subgrantees reconcile the payment reports between the fiscal and program units prior to payment. The reconciliation process between outstanding applications in ‘Approved’ and ‘Pending Payment’ statuses must be done after the GET and PUT files have been created.
- H. Subgrantees must adhere to equipment and software specifications to operate Virtual ROMA effectively.
- I. Subgrantees must ensure that personnel with application approval rights thoroughly review applications prior to approval to minimize errors.
- J. Subgrantees must inactivate, within 24 hours, any user(s) who through termination, resignation, job reassignment, or other reasons user is no longer with agency.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 6.4 Household Benefit

The CSBG program is designed to provide a range of services which assist low-income people to attain skills, knowledge and motivation necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. Some of the services that can be provided are:

- A. Employment- job training services/assistance, employment services/assistance, work support services/assistance and vocational training
- B. Education & Cognitive Development- Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Equivalency (GED) preparation, and tuition assistance

- C. Housing- Mortgage or rental payment, transitional shelter, homeownership counseling, and other housing financial assistance
- D. Income, Infrastructure_& Asset Building- Money management education, budget preparation, income management assistance, consumer credit counseling, social security benefit claims and tax preparation
- E. Health/Social Behavioral Development- Health education screenings, medical/dental assistance, nutritional education training, and meal assistance
- F. Civic Engagement & Community Involvement- Leadership training, and voter education
- G. Support Services- Transportation, emergency clothing, spousal/child crisis intervention, purchasing of identification documents

As a reminder, make your dollars stretch further. Partner with other local organizations who may provide services that you do not offer. This practice can avoid duplication of services and ensure the client is provided with all the necessary benefits to achieve self-sufficiency.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 6.5 Client Confidentiality

- A. MDHS and its subgrantees are responsible for protecting the confidentiality of client information.
- B. Subgrantees must maintain client files under lock and key.
- C. Client appointments should be conducted in areas where the conversation cannot be overheard by others.
- D. Subgrantee staff should not discuss confidential client information with other staff unless to coordinate or proceed with client services.
- E. Even though the Virtual ROMA system has a screen for all users to agree to confidentiality before entering client data, each subgrantee staff member is required to sign a ‘Confidentiality Statement’ and submit to DCS prior to being granted access to the Virtual ROMA system.
- F. Client information should only be discussed with other service organizations/partners when referring households for additional services.
- G. The client must sign the ‘Authorization of Release of Information Form’ (Form ARF 001) for the subgrantee to refer the household for other services.

The only exception to the confidentiality requirement is if a client or household member discloses potential domestic abuse, child abuse/neglect, elderly abuse/neglect, or disabled abuse/neglect; the information must be reported to the proper authorities, regardless of the consent of the client.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 6.6 Case Management

Case management is defined as a process to plan, seek, advocate for, and monitor services on behalf of a client. This process enables case managers of the eligible entities to coordinate efforts to serve a client through professional teamwork and referrals to expand the range of services offered. The goal of case management is to optimize client functioning and well-being by coordinating and providing quality services, in the most effective and efficient manner to enable clients to become self-sufficient. The core functions of case management are as follows:

- 1) Engagement with clients;
 - 2) Assessment of client priorities, strengths, and challenges;
 - 3) Development and implementation of a service delivery plan with the client;
 - 4) Monitoring of the service delivery plan;
 - 5) Evaluation of outcomes, and
 - 6) Closure (termination of service delivery plan or transition follow-up).
- A. To receive CSBG assistance, the client is required to comply with case management. The subgrantee will determine if the applicant is a good candidate for case management based on client's assessment and interview.
- 1) If the client is a good candidate, the subgrantee will proceed with creating the case plan. The applicant will then have two options:
 - i. Opt-in – If the client chooses to comply with case management, the subgrantee will continue creating the applicant's case plan.
 - ii. Opt-out – If the client chooses to opt-out of case management for either of the following reasons, (Refusals [Barriers], Employment Schedule Restraints, Cannot Commit [With Reason], or Care for Vulnerable Family Members). If the applicant refuses to participate with no barriers, then CSBG services cannot be provided. A list of referrals should be provided by the subgrantee.
 - For rent/mortgage assistance the applicant may receive a one-month lifetime payment. Refer to Rule 5.4.B for additional guidance.

Any subsequent request will require them to opt-in to case management or services cannot be provided.

- iii. If the client is elderly and/or disabled, case management is required with restrictions. The domains that a vulnerable household can receive assistance in, are Budget, Transportation, Housing, Nutrition, Emergency, or referrals to additional programs.
 - For rent/mortgage assistance, an applicant may receive a one-month past due and/or one current month payment per program year.
 - For emergency cases, no more than two months past due and/or one current month can be paid per program year for utility assistance.
- 2) If the client is not a good candidate for case management, the subgrantee will list the reason why the client is not a good fit and continue to make the payment. The subgrantee must explain to the applicant that case management is a requirement to request additional assistance.
- 3) The Subgrantee must ensure that the clients opt-in or opt-out status does not change due to a new program year starting. Failure to adhere to this will result in unallowable costs.
- 4) The subgrantee must make the client aware that compliance with case plan is required to continue receiving CSBG assistance.
- 5) Subgrantees must work with clients when creating the client's case plan to determine course of action needed to assist the client with becoming self-sufficient.
- 6) It is at the agency's discretion on how to use and distribute CSBG funds to applicants.
- 7) Subgrantees have the right to terminate a client's case plan if goals need to be reassessed and the client is refusing to comply with case plan without a valid reason. No further monetary assistance can be provided.
- 8) Follow-up appointments for additional CSBG assistance must be in-person.
- B. Success stories are required when a goal has been achieved and case plan has been terminated.
- C. Referrals are crucial to the success of case management for a client facing multiple issues. If a client requires support beyond the services offered by CSBG, the entity must refer the client to other intra-support services, and/or to other local/state programs.
- D. **All contact with the client must be documented in Virtual ROMA.**

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 6.7 Crisis and Emergency Services

Mississippi offers year-round crisis assistance which aids households who have encountered a crisis within the last 30 days. Energy-related assistance must be referred to the LIHEAP program. **CSBG dollars should only be utilized for energy related costs in emergency situations not due to LIHEAP benefit matrix exhaustion.**

CSBG Assistance for Disaster Relief includes assistance for Natural disaster (wildfire, hurricane, tornado, flood, etc.) or extreme inclement weather conditions determined by the National Weather Service and/or declared by the President or Governor. Allowable uses of include:

- A. Costs to temporarily house or shelter individuals in which homes have been destroyed or damaged;
 - 1) Hotels (up to 5 days),
 - 2) Apartments (1 month rent and deposit), or
 - 3) Other living situations that place people in settings to preserve health and safety and to move them away from the crisis situation;
- B. Costs for transportation (such as cars, shuttles, buses, etc.) to move individuals away from the crisis area to shelters;
- C. Utility reconnection costs (including water and sewage);
- D. Clothing;
- E. Medicine;
- F. Food;
- G. Furniture;
- H. Household items;
- I. Crisis payments for utilities and utility deposits;
- J. Purchase and installation of generators;
- K. Costs associated with mobile outreach, and
- L. Other things needed (contact DCS for approval).

Part 28 Chapter 7: Vendor Requirements & Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Rule 7.1 Vendor Agreements

- A. W-9 forms from each vendor must be added to the Virtual ROMA system by the Fiscal Officer/appointee. W-9 forms must be dated within the current year. DCS will approve all vendor request before services can be rendered.
- B. Subgrantees must maintain original vendor agreements indefinitely.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 7.2 Vendor Refunds

- A. Vendor payments refunded to a subgrantee may occur as a result of a household moving, closing an account, other household circumstances, or instances of error or fraud.
- B. Subgrantees must inform vendors to send the refund checks to the agency that submitted the payment on behalf of the household.
- C. If the refund is for a deposit, the vendor can utilize the funds to offset the final bill. However, if there is an overage, the funds must be returned to the subgrantee.
- D. The **vendor** must include the following information with each refund check, even if the refund check is for more than one household:
 - 1) Household's name (name on the account)
 - 2) Address
 - 3) Account number
 - 4) Amount of household refund
 - 5) Year credit occurred
 - 6) Date of payment on account
 - 7) Reason for refund
- E. Subgrantees should account for these refunds separately in the subgrantees accounting system. It is very important that each refund be identified by the CSBG program year.
- F. Agency Fiscal management user(s) are required to complete the vendor refund process within Virtual ROMA after receiving a refund check from the vendor.

- G. All CSBG grants that are still *open (current)*, the Vendor Refunds **must** go back into the awarded amount at the agency level *to be reissued as benefit to any household*. However, the agency must still request the required documents from the Vendor for your records and credit the client's account accordingly in the VROMA system.
- H. Subgrantees **must** return all vendor refunds for all grants *where the period of performance has ended (closed)* to the Department of Human Services- Division of Community Services. *Subgrantees must submit one check for all refunds received for the previous year(s) closed CSBG grants no more than twice a year (June 30th and December 31st of each year).*

Subgrantees must submit the following information with each subgrantee refund check:

- 1) Vendor Name and Vendor check #
 - 2) Household name for each refund
 - 3) Address
 - 4) Account number
 - 5) Client ID number
 - 6) Amount of household refund
 - 7) Reason for refund
 - 8) CSBG grant year
 - 9) Date of benefit
 - 10) Date refund received by Subgrantee, and
 - 11) The required Procurement Services document for processing payment. (*See example in the Forms/Resources section of Virtual ROMA*)
- I. Subgrantee checks should be made payable to: Treasurer, State of Mississippi and mailed to:

Director, Division of Community Services
200 South Lamar Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39201

- J. MDHS-DCS will return any prior year refunds to the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Community Services.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4. Revised: January 2026

Rule 7.3 Vendor Payments

Subgrantees must make payments on client accounts to vendors within twenty (20) business days of application approval. Failure to comply will result in a DCS request for MDHS Division of Monitoring to conduct an additional monitoring visit which may result in questioned cost.

Rule 7.4. Memorandum of Understanding

Agencies should establish partnerships with local entities and organizations to assist in the provision of services to meet the needs of the clients the agency serves. Signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) should serve as an agreement of conditions of the forthcoming partnership or collaboration. These partnerships should cover monetary or non-monetary services. Intra-office referrals should be made as most subgrantees have additional programs not funded by DCS (e.g., Head Start, Congregate Meals, Rural Housing Services and Transportation Program).

Updated copies of MOUs should be signed yearly, unless otherwise noted in the terms of the agreement.

Part 28 Chapter 8: Program Compliance

Rule 8.1 Reporting and Accountability

- A. **CSBG Annual Report**-The State must submit an annual report to OCS in the form of the CSBG Annual Report by March 31st of every year. Eligible entities are required to submit information regarding this report upon request from DCS. The National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP) will email a database to the State. This database will be emailed to eligible entities for input. The State will compile information from each entity to complete the statewide report and return database to NASCSPP.
- B. CSBG Informational Memorandum (IM) 138 provides guidance to states for the establishment of **Organizational Standards** as part of a performance management and accountability system for the CSBG national network. The Office of Community Services (OCS) requires states to report on the standards for eligible entities through the online state plan and annual report.

The purpose of the Organizational Standards is to ensure that eligible entities have appropriate organizational capacity in all areas covered by the standards. States are required to provide the oversight and technical assistance necessary to assure compliance with the standards.

The Center of Excellence (COE)-developed standards are organized into three thematic groups consisting of nine categories and a total of 58 standards for private eligible entities and 50 standards for public eligible entities.

- 1) Maximum Feasible Participation
 - Consumer Input and Involvement
 - Community Engagement
 - Community Assessment
- 2) Vision and Direction
 - Organizational Leadership
 - Board Governance
 - Strategic Planning
- 3) Operations and Accountability
 - Human Resource Management
 - Financial Operations and Oversight
 - Data and Analysis

DCS requires eligible entities to annually submit documentation to verify compliance to all standards through the use of Smartsheet. Documentation is reviewed by DCS and a letter sent to eligible entity executive director which gives the results of the review and

the percentage of standards attained. Technical assistance will be provided as needed to help entities achieve compliance.

- C. Logic models are the process by which case management is reported. These models assist entities with program evaluation by providing a visual statement of the activities planned to produce positive outcomes for the family, agency, and community by assessing the priority needs and creating programs to alleviate the identified needs. Eligible entities should complete logic models based on the top three needs identified in the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment. Logic models provide a plan to address those needs by stating goals and outcome objectives. The projected outcomes should align with the NPIs submitted by the entity.
- D. Board Minutes- Copies of the minutes of each entity's board meeting shall be submitted to DCS no later than 10 calendar days after the date of the meeting at which those minutes were ratified. If the meeting was not a quorum, the official minutes must be submitted within 3 calendar days of the scheduled meeting.
- E. Success stories shall be submitted to the CSBG/LIHEAP Program Director of DCS by the first Tuesday of each month, if the agency does not have a success story, this should be communicated.
- F. Outcome Measurement Report is due by the 5th of each month to report performance of NPIs.
- G. Monthly Cost Sheets are required to be submitted monthly by Subgrantees to show expenditures by cost category and line items. These forms should be submitted to the Division of Budgets and Accounting, Office of Procurement Services and a copy to DCS.
- H. Closeouts - Please see the 'MDHS Subgrant/ Agreement Manual' found at www.mdhs.ms.gov/subgrantee-manual/ for closeout policy. A copy of the closeout must also be sent to DCS.
- I. Earned Income Tax Credit assistance is offered to clients through the partnership between the MDHS-DCS, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and eligible entities. The IRS provides training and support to eligible entities that sponsor free tax preparation sites. Entities are encouraged to have at least one site in its service area. If there is not a site in a county, the case worker must refer clients to a VITA site in that county. This service is provided to clients to further assist with additional income to enhance the case management process.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 8.2 Client Complaints/Concerns

DCS receives client complaints and concerns from the MDHS Constituent Services unit, and phone calls from clients or other individuals. Subgrantees should follow these steps when responding to DCS:

- A. DCS will submit the client complaint/concern in the DCS Client Tracker.
- B. The subgrantee must contact the client and provide a response and/or resolution in the client tracker within two (2) business days depending on the severity of the case.
- C. If additional time is required to completely resolve the issue, the subgrantee must note in the tracker that additional time is needed.
- D. If the concern is not handled within two days, an email will be sent to the Executive Director to notify them of concern and to provide a response within twenty-four (24) hours.
- E. If a client makes a complaint at the subgrantee's office, the subgrantee should attempt to resolve issues before giving the DCS number to the client.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 8.3 CSBG Performance Management

Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) is a complete management practice that integrates outcomes and results into a community action agency's administration, management, operations, and evaluation of programs and services.

The core components of ROMA are:

- 1) Reviewing agency mission
- 2) Assessing Community Needs
- 3) Developing results-oriented plans
- 4) Implementing the plan
- 5) Evaluating performance using outcomes and indicators
- 6) Managing performance using logic models

The CSBG Act Section 676(b)(12) states-

The State and all eligible entities in the State will, not later than fiscal year 2001, participate in the Results Oriented Management and Accountability System, another performance measure system for which the Secretary facilitated development pursuant to section 678E(b), or an alternative system for measuring performance and results that meets the requirements of that

section, and a description of outcome measures to be used to measure eligible entity performance in promoting self-sufficiency, family stability, and community revitalization.

The State of Mississippi commits its CSBG resources and activities toward achieving measurable outcomes in the three National Community Action Network Theory of Change Goals:

Goal 1: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.

Goal 2: Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.

Goal 3: People with low incomes are engaged in building opportunities in communities.

Entities will utilize the ROMA cycle as part of a strengthened performance system:

- 1) Assessment- Community needs and resources; agency data
- 2) Planning- Using agency mission and assessment data to identify results and strategies
- 3) Implementation- Services and strategies produce results
- 4) Achievement of Results- Observe and report progress
- 5) Evaluation- Analyze data and compare with benchmarks

Entities will utilize the National Performance Indicators (NPIs) to monitor performance of services to low-income families and communities. The State of Mississippi requires all eligible entities to use the statewide client tracking and eligibility system, Virtual ROMA, to capture this data.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 8.4 State Performance Management

The Office of Community Services (OCS), in collaboration with the CSBG network, created State Accountability Measures to track organizational performance by State CSBG Lead Agencies. The State Accountability Standards capture data about the activities and functions carried out on the state level. Additionally, the standards capture the effectiveness and efficiency of the State in its implementation of the state plan and the impact the State has on the performance of its eligible entities.

MDHS-DCS reports on the State Accountability Standards through its annual State Plan and Annual Report.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 8.5 Case Files

- A. Applications and supporting documentation for applicants must be kept in individual case files. Case files must be filed in alphabetical order according to the last name. Case files should always be maintained under lock and key and housed in the local county of residence of the client. Active case files and inactive case files should be maintained separately.
- B. Case files must not contain copies of client personal identity information (PII) such as social security cards, birth certificates, photo id, etc. These documents must be scanned into Virtual ROMA only and given back to the client.
- C. Please refer to the MDHS Subgrantee Agreement Manual for file retention requirements. However, as a general rule, case files must be maintained for three (3) years. If there is a documented case of waste, fraud, and abuse, audit findings, or a fair hearing was conducted, the file must be maintained for ten (10) years.
- D. The following documents must be in a case file and scanned into Virtual ROMA:
 - 1) Proof of income for all household members;
 - 2) Copy of bill(s) to be paid from vendor;
 - 3) Intake form (signed and dated);
 - 4) Authorization of Release of Information form (signed and dated);
 - 5) RFAI form (signed and dated, if applicable);
 - 6) Notification of Services form;
 - 7) Notification of Pending Services form;
 - 8) Case Plan; and
 - 9) Assessment
 - 10) Budget Sheet
 - 11) Case Management forms if applicable.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026

Rule 8.6 Monitoring and Audit

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) is required to monitor the activities of its subgrantees by following the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations, and the OMB Circular A-133 Compliance Supplement. MDHS shall monitor each project, program, subgrant, function, or activity supported by a Federal award to assure compliance with applicable Federal regulations and that performance goals are achieved.

A. Monitoring

- 1) The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) requires States to conduct on-site monitoring of LIHEAP subgrantee's once every three (3) years. MDHS elects to conduct an annual monitoring visit to ensure compliance with applicable Federal and State regulations, policies, and procedures.
- 2) MDHS has established uniform monitoring policies designed to ensure that all subgrants under the jurisdiction of MDHS are administered in compliance with Federal requirements and with the terms of the subgrant agreements. Monitoring subgrants, for compliance with the applicable Federal regulations, State laws, Agency policies, and the terms of the subgrant agreements, is the responsibility of the MDHS Division of Monitoring. Please see the 'MDHS Subgrant Manual' found at <https://www.mdhs.ms.gov/support/procurement/resources/> for the complete monitoring policy.
- 3) Subgrant monitoring procedures may include several of the various options available. These options include: reviewing reports submitted by the subgrantee; reviewing documentation supporting expenses reported under MDHS subgrants; reviewing the subgrantee's single audit or program-specific audit results and evaluating audit findings and the subgrantee's corrective action plan; performing on-site reviews of fiscal and programmatic records and observing subgrantee operations; and/or, arranging for limited scope audits of specific compliance areas.

B. Single Audit

- 1) The Director of the Division of Monitoring reviews the subgrantee's audit finding(s), and forwards to the Division of Community Services and the Monitoring Supervisor.
- 2) The audit finding(s) is then placed on a spreadsheet, discussed during monitoring visits with the said subgrantee, and addressed on the monitoring report performed by the Division of Monitoring.
- 3) Please see the 'MDHS Subgrant Manual' found at <https://www.mdhs.ms.gov/support/procurement/resources/> for specific Single Audit requirements.

C. Federal Program Compliance Review

- 1) At any time, the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Community Services, Division of Energy Assistance may conduct a program compliance review of the State.

- 2) During this review, subgrantees are selected to be monitored on program compliance. Subgrantees must cooperate fully with federal reviewers and provide any requested documentation.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026*

Rule 8.7 Threatening Behavior

- A. Any applicant who engages in the use of aggressive or disruptive language, threats, or behavior against a subgrantee agency, subgrantee staff, subgrantee contractor, or state/federal staff shall be prohibited from receiving services for one year from the date of the incident, for the first offense. That staff person must complete an incident report and submit it to their Executive Director. The incident report should be uploaded into Virtual ROMA and the client case coded as sanctioned.

Any subsequent threats or disruptive behavior will permanently disqualify the client from receiving services. The staff must complete an incident report and submit it to their Executive Director. The incident report should be uploaded into Virtual ROMA and the client case coded as permanently sanctioned.

- B. Any kind of physical contact or physical threats with firearms or weapons made against a subgrantee agency, subgrantee staff, subgrantee contractor, or state/federal staff, will disqualify an applicant or household from services permanently. The staff must notify their Executive Director immediately. The Executive Director must contact local authorities and file a police report. A copy of the report and detailed account of the incident must be kept in the client's file, scanned into Virtual ROMA and coded as sanctioned, also a copy must be submitted to the Director of the Division of Community Services

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: January 2026*

Rule 8.8 Criminal/Illegal Activities

- A. CSBG funds may not be used to pay for any criminal acts punishable with fines, fees, penalties, and/or imprisonment. An application that is submitted for a bill which explicitly states that part of the bill is inclusive of an illegal activity such as tampering and other theft for services shall not be approved until the tampering fees/penalties are paid.
- B. The vendor may adjust the bill to remove the illegal fees and the Subgrantee can pay the portion that does not include such fees and penalties. Further, fees and penalties must be paid prior to any CSBG funds being obligated on behalf of the client's bill.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: May 2022*

Rule 8.9 Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

The Mississippi Department of Human Services has zero tolerance for the commission or concealment of acts of waste, fraud and abuse. Allegations of such acts will be investigated and pursued until the logical conclusion, including legal action when warranted.

A. Definitions of Waste, Fraud and Abuse

Waste involves the taxpayers not receiving a reasonable value for money in connection with any government funded activities due to an inappropriate act or omission by players with control over or access to government resources.

Fraud is a type of illegal act of obtaining something of value through willful misrepresentation or a false representation of a material fact, whether by words or by conduct, by false or misleading allegations, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed, which deceives another so that he acts, or fails to act to his detriment.

Abuse involves behavior that is deficient or improper when compared with behavior that a prudent person would consider reasonable and necessary business practice given the facts and circumstances. Abuse also includes misuse of authority or position for personal financial interests or those of an immediate or close family member or business associate.

Additional examples of Waste, Fraud and Abuse include but are not limited to:

- i. Misrepresenting household size or income
- ii. Falsifying application
- iii. Forging documents needed to complete intake
- iv. Omitting client information
- v. Creating ghost clients
- vi. Charging application fees
- vii. Former employee having access to software and system
- viii. Receiving kickbacks from vendor
- ix. Gross mismanagement or gross waste of funds

B. General Reporting of Waste, Fraud and Abuse

DCS encourages and enables, without retaliation or the fear of retaliation, employees, board of directors, vendors, volunteers, clients and the general public to disclose information believed to be waste, fraud, and abuse of CSBG & LIHEAP funding.

Complaints of waste, fraud and abuse will be handled according to the process established in this policy.

Anonymous reports may be submitted to the Office of Inspector General via 1-800-299-6905 or by mail.

MDHS
Office of Inspector General
200 South Lamar Street
Jackson, MS 39201

Providing specific occurrence details of suspected waste, fraud, and abuse will expedite investigative efforts. There is no requirement to submit identifying information from those who wish to report suspected waste, fraud, and abuse.

Tips will be investigated in the order that they have been received with no preference given to those who provided identifying information.

C. Agency Reported Suspected Waste, Fraud and Abuse

1) Reporting Suspected Client Fraud

If an agency suspects that a client has committed waste, fraud or abuse, it is incumbent upon the agency to do their due diligence to review and provide documentation in support of their claim (documentation should include but is not limited to proof of misrepresentation or falsified document). All suspected fraud should be reported immediately at dcsfraudreporting@mdhs.ms.gov.

- i. All claims must be submitted to DCS for review. Documentation should be uploaded into Virtual ROMA for DCS to complete a thorough review. Upon completion of DCS' review, a response will be provided to the agency indicating if the claim has been substantiated, denied, or referred. If the claim cannot be substantiated or denied by DCS, the claim will be referred to the MDHS Office of Inspector General.
- ii. For substantiated claims, clients will be denied assistance following program penalties and will be coded as sanctioned in Virtual ROMA.

2) Reporting Suspected Representative of an Agency Fraud - Representatives of an agency include employees, board members, or volunteers.

If it is suspected that a representative of an agency has committed waste, fraud or abuse, it is incumbent upon the individual reporting the fraud to provide documentation in support of their claim. Documentation should include but is not limited to proof of misrepresentation or falsified document. All suspected fraud should be reported immediately.

- i Suspected waste, fraud or abuse by an employee of an agency should be reported to their immediate supervisor. If the reporter's supervisor is suspected of fraud, it should be reported to the Executive Director. If it is believed that the Executive Director may be committing fraud,

the activity should be reported to the Board of Directors. The Division of Community Services should also be notified when an executive director has been reported to the Board.

- ii If it is believed that a member of the Board of Directors is involved, then the activity shall be reported to the Office of Inspector General at 1-800-299-6905 or by mail. The Division of Community Services should also be notified.

MDHS
Office of Inspector General
200 South Lamar Street
Jackson, MS 39201

- iii In the event that the agency is unable to support its claim but suspects that waste, fraud and abuse has taken place, the case **must** be referred to MDHS Office of Inspector General for investigation at 1-800-299-6905 or email fraud@mdhs.ms.gov.

3) Reporting Vendor Suspected Waste, Fraud, or Abuse

If it is suspected that a vendor has committed waste, fraud or abuse, it is incumbent upon the individual reporting the fraud to do their due diligence to provide documentation in support of their claim. Documentation should include, but is not limited to, proof of misrepresentation or falsified document.

- i. All claims must be submitted to DCS for review. Documents must be uploaded into Virtual ROMA for DCS to review. Upon completion of DCS' review, a response will be provided to the agency indicating if the claim has been substantiated, denied, or referred. If the claim cannot be substantiated or denied by DCS, the claim will be referred to the MDHS Office of Inspector General.

D. Penalties for Waste, Fraud and Abuse

- 1) A client who has committed waste, fraud and abuse will be subject to the following sanctions:
 - i If it is the client's first offense, the individual's household will be ineligible for services for an entire year from the date of the decision and benefits will be recouped if necessary. Caseworkers must also code the client's case as sanctioned in Virtual ROMA.
 - If the client is an Employee/Board Member or Volunteer of the agency they must also be terminated, removed from the board or

deemed as ineligible to volunteer with any of the agency's programs.

- ii If it is the client's second offense, the individual's household will be ineligible for services for twenty-four months from the date of the decision and benefits will be recouped if necessary.
 - iii If it is the client's third offense, the individual will be disqualified permanently from all DCS funded programs and is subject to prosecution and/or recoupment of any benefits provided, following due process as defined in agency regulations.
- 2) If a representative of the Agency has committed Waste, Fraud and Abuse shall be terminated or removed from the board. Additionally, they may be subject to prosecution and/or recoupment of any benefits provided, following due process as defined in agency regulations.
 - 3) If a vendor has committed waste, fraud and abuse, the vendor will be suspended from participation and may be subject to prosecution and/or recoupment of any benefits provided, following due process as defined in agency regulations.
 - 4) If there is an error that was caused by the subgrantee's mistake, misrepresentation or fraud and it results in overpayment, the client, agency representative or vendor must not be held responsible for repayment. The subgrantee is responsible for repayment from non-federal funds.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4. Revised: January 2026*

Rule 8.10 Whistleblower Protection

According to Mississippi Code Section 25-9-173, et seq. an employer cannot dismiss or otherwise adversely affect the compensation or employment status of an employee who testifies or provides information to an investigative body.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-2(4); Miss. Code Ann. § 43-1-4 Revised: May 2022*

Rule 8.11 Fair Hearing Process

An applicant or recipient has the right to request a Hearing or Appeal if they are dissatisfied with the denial, delay, cancellation, or any adverse decision related to the client's application for services.

A. Types of Hearings

1) Appeal (Agency Level)

i. Basis for an Appeal

- Incorrect bill submitted
- Information provided is insufficient to determine eligibility
- Requested additional information not returned within ten (10) calendar days
- Non-compliance with CSBG Case Management Plan
- Threatening behavior toward staff
- Your claim for assistance was not acted upon with reasonable promptness

If a client submits a Fair Hearing request for any of the above-mentioned reasons their request will be automatically denied.

ii. The client must submit a **request for an appeal** within **thirty (30) calendar days** of the denial or adverse action.

The request must be submitted on <https://virtualroma.mdhs.ms.gov/> and include all of the following:

Name of Community Service Agency
Full Name and Address
Date of Denial or Adverse Action Notice
Stated Reason(s) for Denial or Action
Reason(s) for Appeal Request

The client's request will be submitted to the Executive Director and Board Chair. **The Executive Director and Board Chair will have 15 calendar days to contact the client to schedule an appeal. After scheduling and hearing the grievance, the Executive Director and Board Chair will then have 15 calendar days to make a final determination in regard to the appeal.**

2) Fair Hearing (MDHS Level)

i. Basis for a Fair Hearing

- If the client was denied at the agency-level appeal process and has met all the criteria for a complete application, but still feels they are eligible for services for the following reasons:

- Disagreement with the denial itself
- Incorrect information or assessment
- Procedural error
- Discrimination
- Failure to make a timely decision
- Changes in circumstances
- Other _____

Clients must first exhaust the agency-level appeal process before requesting a Fair Hearing with the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS).

ii. Requesting a Fair Hearing

The client can request a fair hearing by calling 601-359-4921 or by completing a MDHS Programmatic Appeal Request form at (<https://www.mdhs.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/MDHS-OIG-200-Programmatic-Appeal-Request-Form.pdf>).

iii. Submitting a Fair Hearing Request

The client can submit a MDHS Programmatic Appeal Request form by:

Email: admin.hearings@mdhs.ms.gov

Fax: 601-359-5047

Mail: Mississippi Department of Human Services
Office of the Inspector General
Administrative Hearings
P.O. Box 352
Jackson, MS 39201

iv. After submitting a Fair Hearing Request

The client will receive a notice letting them know a date and time for their fair hearing. Usually, fair hearings are conducted over the phone.

During the hearing, the client will be given the opportunity to present their position fully and explain why they believe that the decision made by Agency was wrong. The client may bring any evidence that they believe supports their position. MDHS may also present information about why the agency believes the decision was correct.

After hearing from both sides, the hearing officer will make a decision about whether the agency's decision was wrong and should be changed or the agency's decision was correct and should not be changed.

Important Information

If at any point during the appeals process, the initial denial or adverse action is reversed, appropriate corrective actions, including processing payments or reinstating services, will be taken by the Community Service Agency in a timely manner.

Please note: **Lack of available funding** in your county is not subject to a Fair Hearing. In such cases, subgrantees should:

- 1) Refer applicants to other service providers,
- 2) Utilize non-federal funds where possible,
- 3) Maintain a waitlist of applicants to prioritize once funds become available.

Contact Information

If the client has questions about this notice or the appeals process, please have them to contact the local **Community Service Agency/Human Resource Agency** or the **Mississippi Department of Human Services** at admin.hearings@mdhs.ms.gov.

*A copy of the Fair Hearing & Appeal Process must be posted at each agency and county office for clients to view.

Rule 8.12 Board Policy

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Reauthorization Act of 1998 requires that, as a condition of designation and to receive CSBG funding, private non-profit entities and public organizations administer the CSBG program through tripartite boards that "fully participate in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program to serve low-income communities." In order for the State to promote the continued viability and effectiveness of eligible entities through appropriately constituted and well-functioning boards, this policy is issued to provide guidance on the composition, role, and responsibilities of the tripartite board.

A. Board Composition

The eligible entity's board of directors should consist of a minimum of six (6) members. Each county must have representation.

1) Representatives of Low-Income Individuals and Families (Low-Income Sector)

The CSBG statute requires that a minimum of one-third of tripartite board membership be:

- i. Comprised of representatives of low-income individuals and families who currently reside in the areas served. The implicit intent is to ensure those who are served by the eligible entity have a strong voice in agency governance and communicating the needs of the community.
- ii. “Chosen in accordance with democratic selection procedures.”
Representatives of this sector may be nominated or elected either within a neighborhood or within the community as a whole; at a community meeting, a community organization meeting, or meeting of another low-income service provider; and the meeting was publicized using at least one of various kinds of media. No more than two members of Head Start Policy Councils may serve on the board.

2) Elected Public Officials or their Representatives (Public Sector)

The CSBG statute requires one-third of tripartite membership be elected officials. If a sufficient number of elected officials is not available, an appointed public official may be chosen. The elected official may choose a designee to act on his/her behalf. The designee would then be the board member and have full authority to exercise voting rights.

Entities are not restricted to choosing certain elected officials to serve on the board. These members should support the goal of the agency to address the poverty needs of the community and coordinate action by local governments. If an entity’s bylaws state only certain elected officials can serve, the State strongly suggests a revision of the bylaws.

Public officials must be “holding office on the date of selection.” Also, the public official or designee may serve on the board only while the public official is in office. The public official may change a designee at any time by submitting a letter to the board. Entities are responsible for ensuring this sector remains current such as prompt notification of newly elected officials or currently elected officials of the opportunity to serve on the board should the entity still choose. The entity must ensure timely replacement of board members who no longer hold office and ensure the last day of office for the public official is the last day of service on the board.

3) Representatives of Major Groups and Interests in the Community (Private Sector)

The remaining board members must be selected from “business, industry, labor, religious, law enforcement, education, or other major groups and interests in the community served.” Members of this sector are included because they represent the balance of the community, and the entity cannot succeed without the support, resources, and participation of this group.

Eligible entities must ensure that no organization, business, or group has an indefinite seat on the board, meaning the selection of board members shall allow the opportunity for other interested organizations to serve on the board. Anyone chosen in this sector must be a member of the organization or an employee and live in that county.

B. Background Checks

Federal background checks must be conducted on all Board Members. If the background check identifies a past or present conviction for a felony or crime (either federal or state) the individual may not be seated on the board.

C. Duration of Service

The state requires a board member to serve no more than a maximum of three (3) four-year terms. **This requirement is not retroactive, meaning, board members whose terms expired prior to this policy revision cannot serve the additional term granted by this policy revision.**

The board member must be re-elected or re-appointed at least one month before the end of each four-year term. The terms may be continuous or there may be a break in service. Eligible entities are encouraged to stagger the term expirations, whereas not to create an issue of too many board members leaving the board at the same time thus jeopardizing the governance of the board.

Should a board seat become vacant, it must be filled within a sixty (60) day period, unless a written request for waiver has been granted by DCS Director, within the sixty-day period. Further, it is the responsibility of the board to notify DCS in writing within ten (10) days of any board changes, and an updated board roster submitted.

The entity shall provide DCS with a current board roster with supporting documentation of each member’s election or appointment. This information must also be kept on file at the entity’s main office for review during monitoring visits.

Entities may not seat a former employee as a board member for a period of two (2) years after leaving employment at the agency. Agencies may prohibit a former employee who

has been terminated from serving on the board. Entities should prohibit federal/state employees from serving on the board if there is the potential for a conflict of interest between the federal/state office and the entity's business transactions, such as a potential funding source.

Entities may not employ a board member during the time of service on the board, nor for a period of two (2) years after leaving the board. This waiting period is to avoid the appearance of a board member having an undue employment advantage.

D. Training Requirements

New board members or members who had a one (1) year or more break in service shall participate in an orientation within two (2) months of being seated. The orientation shall include at a minimum: federal, state, local policies and procedures as it relates to the entity and its programs; board bylaws; articles of incorporation; entity mission; entity strategic plan; entity financial and programmatic reports; program overview to include sources of funding; audit report; board responsibilities and liability; conflict of interest; and ROMA.

Board members shall participate in training at least every two (2) years on board responsibilities and governance as specified in the CSBG Organizational Standards.

Training and/or orientation may be done at board meetings, special sessions, and may be done in person, electronic media, or other methods as determined by the board.

Should an entity fail to comply with training requirements, DCS will declare entity at-risk, and issue a request for a corrective action plan, which may result in a notice to terminate funding.

E. Board Member Responsibilities

The following list of responsibilities is necessary for the success of the entity, however, it is not all inclusive of what is expected of a board member:

- 1) Fully participate in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the entity's programs.
- 2) Plan and participate in the entity's fund-raising events.
- 3) Develop entity mission statement and ensure activities and programs support it.
- 4) Develop entity strategic plan and receive periodic reports regarding the progress of it. Establish policy for the entity.

- 5) Supervise and evaluate one employee, the entity's executive director. Attend and participate in all scheduled board meetings.
- 6) Empower the entity by working with the community and being an ambassador for the entity and its programs.
- 7) Participate in scheduled trainings and entity events.

F. Board Committees

- 1) Entities are required to appoint at least five (5) standing committees: (1) Executive; (2) Planning and Evaluation; (3) Finance; (4) Personnel and; (5) Human Rights Committees. The entity may change the description of the activities of the standing committees as needed to conform to the diverse dynamics of the entity.
 - i. The Executive Committee is responsible for the general conduct of the board's business on a day-to-day basis. The major functions of this committee are: to act upon matters in a timely manner; establish standing and subcommittees and assign members to each; review the major administrative policies and recommend modifications to the full Board; secure adequate legal counsel for the entity; and to evaluate the entity's executive director.
 - ii. The Planning and Evaluation Committee is responsible for the development of the strategic plan and the evaluation of the entity's performance on meeting the goals in the strategic plan. The duties of this committee include: ensure the community strengths and needs assessment is completed; review and approve programs to be operated by the entity; develop internal reporting standards for programs; recommend funding of specific programs to the full board; evaluate each program or project on a timely basis; and coordinate efforts of the public and private sectors and other committees to meet the needs of the families served.
 - iii. The Finance Committee oversees the fiscal functions of the agency. This committee reviews budget proposals prepared by the entity staff; reviews financial reports on a monthly basis; ensures an adequate fiscal management system is in place; assists in securing additional sources of funding; and review and make recommendations to the full Board on all fiscal matters.
 - iv. The Personnel Committee is responsible for overseeing personnel functions and certain administrative functions of the entity. The duties of this committee include the review of personnel policies; promotions;

salary ranges; hiring of employees recommended by the Executive Director; assist in the selection process when employing an Executive Director; and promote staff and career development programs for entity staff.

- v. The Human Rights Committee acts on matters regarding the rights of employees. Listening, hearing, fact-finding and providing objective judgements are the core functions of this committee. Other functions include ensuring protection of the entity and the rights of employees as established in the agency's Equal Opportunity Plan and recommending approval or denial of it to the Board; hearing equal opportunity complaints and recommending possible solutions to the Board; and ensuring due process prior to the termination of an employee.

Entities may appoint as many committees as needed to carry out the responsibilities of the board effectively. Committee membership should reflect the composition of the Board.

i.e. a committee should be comprised of members from different sectors, counties, etc. Committees should divide the workload of the board, develop and promote the expertise of members, and permit decision-making between meetings. Entities should have a board development plan to ensure quality membership selection.

Voting by proxy is not permitted at board or committee meetings.

G. Removal of Board Members and Officers

Entities must develop removal provisions in its bylaws, consistent with state nonprofit corporation law, which specifies special notice and other procedural requirements for removal. The board may remove any director or officer for cause, including but not limited to: false certifications on the application, unexcused absences for a certain number of consecutive board meetings, failure to comply with the entity's conflict of interest policy, taking actions not in the best interest of the entity, incapacity, inappropriate conduct.

In instances of waste, fraud, or abuse, a board member **must** be removed immediately after it is discovered.

If any Board Member has been removed from the private or public sector or was not re-elected for the poor sector, they cannot serve in a different sector (i.e. no moving from one sector to another is allowed.)

H. By-Laws Requirements

Board by-laws shall list the total number of seats on the board per sector. They must include procedures for the selection of new board members in case of a vacancy for any reason. All vacancies shall be filled within 60 calendar days. The democratic selection procedure for the low-income sector must be described in detail.

Board by-laws must describe any performance standards (such as attendance, etc.). These standards must include a standard of conduct which specify expectations and conditions under which board members may be sanctioned or removed.

Board by-laws must describe quorum requirements, which shall be at least 50 percent plus one of the seats on the board.

Board by-laws must describe meeting requirements. Board meetings are subject to the State Open Meetings Act. The board shall meet monthly. Board meetings must be scheduled for the convenience of its members and the general public. Eligible entities shall provide notice in writing of any board meetings and agenda to all members at least 5 calendar days in advance. Electronic notices are acceptable, if members receiving the notices have agreed to accept this form of notification. Meeting notices and agendas shall be made available to the general public and MDHS/DCS at the time they are submitted to the board members.

By-laws must not conflict with any federal or MDHS policies or procedures.

I. Board Minutes

The board shall conduct meetings and keep written minutes in accordance with Robert's Rule of Order. Board minutes shall be made available to the public upon request. Minutes shall also be made available upon request in a translation of the appropriate language where a significant portion of the low-income population does not speak English.

Copies of the minutes of each meeting shall be submitted to MDHS/DCS no later than 10 calendar days after the date of the meeting in which the minutes were ratified. If the meeting did not have a quorum, the minutes shall be submitted within 3 calendar days of the meeting.

Board minutes must include a public notice of the meeting (newspaper notice, etc.), an agenda, sign-in sheets, and supporting documentation of newly seated board members. In case of any virtual or phone meetings, a virtual attendance document shall be sent to each individual who participated in the meeting and sent back signed and dated. Board minutes must be submitted on agency letterhead.

APPENDIX

Federal Poverty Guidelines

FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES				
<i>Effective Dates</i>		07/1/2025	10/1/2025	10/1/2025
		WX: DOE, BIL & LIHEAP	CSBG	LIHEAP
<i>Number in Household</i>	100% Category	200% Category	125% Category	60% State Median Income
	Percent of Poverty	Percent of Poverty	Percent of Poverty	Percent of Poverty
1	\$15,650	\$31,300	\$19,563	\$26,740
2	\$21,150	\$42,300	\$26,438	\$34,968
3	\$26,650	\$53,300	\$33,313	\$43,196
4	\$32,150	\$64,300	\$40,188	\$51,424
5	\$37,650	\$75,300	\$47,063	\$59,651
6	\$43,150	\$86,300	\$53,938	\$67,879
7	\$48,650	\$97,300	\$60,813	\$69,422
8	\$54,150	\$108,300	\$67,688	\$70,965
9	\$59,650	\$119,300	\$74,536	\$72,507
10	\$65,150	\$130,300	\$81,438	\$74,050
11	\$70,650	\$141,300	\$88,313	\$75,593
12	\$76,150	\$152,300	\$95,188	\$77,136
13	\$81,650	\$163,300	\$102,063	\$78,678
14	\$87,150	\$174,300	\$108,938	\$80,221
15	\$92,650	\$185,300	\$115,813	\$81,764
16	\$98,150	\$196,300	\$122,688	\$83,306
17	\$103,650	\$207,300	\$129,536	\$84,849
18	\$109,150	\$218,300	\$136,438	\$86,392
19	\$114,650	\$229,300	\$143,313	\$87,935
20	\$120,150	\$240,300	\$150,188	\$89,477
<i>For each additional family member add:</i>	5500	11000	6875	Contact MDHS/DCS