

**Link to Policy Manuals for all Income Maintenance Programs:**

<http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/policyanalysis/PolicyManualPages/IncomeMaint.htm#Family%20Investment%20Program>

**A. Food Assistance**

**General Policy and Treatment of AmeriCorps Income**

The Food Assistance program is Iowa's program under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps). Benefits are issued on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. The EBT card can be used at many locations, such as:

- Grocery Stores
- Convenience Stores
- Several farmer's markets around the state
- Supercenters (such as Wal-Mart & Target)

Things you can purchase with your Food Assistance benefits include:

- Fresh or frozen foods
- Canned or packaged foods
- Vegetable seeds or plants
- Baby formula
- Snacks & soda (including bottle deposit)
- Ice

*Tax cannot be charged on anything bought with food assistance.*

Things you cannot purchase with Food Assistance include:

- Hot foods that are ready to eat
- Alcohol or tobacco products
- Medicine or vitamins
- Pet Foods
- Paper products

**Household Composition**

There are certain people who must be included in one Food Assistance household if they live together.

This includes:

- Spouses
- Parents and their children 21 years of age and under
- Children under 18 and any people having parental control over them
- People who live together and routinely buy and fix their food together

Roommates are not required to be in the same Food Assistance household if they do not meet the criteria for mandatory household members.

**Income**

Income sources include earned (wages) and unearned (such as child support, unemployment, FIP, etc.)

To determine countable income, the total income of all household members (unless income is from exempt source) is added together.

AmeriCorps Payments:

- AmeriCorps payments are excluded as income for Food Assistance
- AmeriCorps VISTA payments are:
  - Excluded if the person was getting Food Assistance or public assistance when the person joined VISTA
  - Counted as earned income if the person was NOT getting Food Assistance or public assistance when joining VISTA

**Income Limits**

The gross income limit is based on household size and changes each October 1<sup>st</sup>. Households with an elderly or disabled member may have income over the gross limit and still be eligible. The current gross income limits are:

<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Maximum Gross Monthly Income</b>
1	\$1,174
2	\$1,579
3	\$1,984
4	\$2,389
5	\$2,794
6	\$3,200
7	\$3,605
8	\$4,010
For each additional person, add \$406	

Deductions from income include:

- Standard deduction of \$141-\$205, based on household size
- 20% earned income deduction
- Shelter (rent or mortgage, taxes & insurance)
- Utilities
- Child care expenses
- Child support paid for children outside the home
- Medical expenses of elderly or disabled household members

*The deductions are not dollar for dollar but work into a formula to determine countable net income.*

After deductions are given, households must meet net income guidelines. These also change each October 1<sup>st</sup>, and the current net income limits are:

<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Maximum Net Monthly Income</b>
1	\$ 903
2	\$1,215
3	\$1,526
4	\$1,838
5	\$2,150
6	\$2,461
7	\$2,773
8	\$3,085

For each additional member, add \$312

If under the net income limit, benefit amount (allotment level) is determined. The allotment levels are based on income, expenses, and household size.

**Resource Limits**

- \$2,000 limit for most households
- \$3,000 limit for household with an elderly or disabled member
- The house you live in and one vehicle do **not** count
- Things like cash, savings accounts and checking accounts **do** count

**For More Information**

- Visit the Food & Nutrition website at [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov)
- Visit the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) website at [www.dhs.state.ia.us](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us) and click on the “Food Assistance” link
- Apply online at [www.yesfood.iowa.gov](http://www.yesfood.iowa.gov)

## **B. Health Benefits**

### **1. Medicaid**

#### **Medicaid Overview**

The Medicaid program pays for a wide range of medically necessary medical and health care procedures for certain groups of low income people.

You must be one of the following to get Medicaid.

- A child under age 21;
- A parent living with a child under age 18;
- A woman who is pregnant;
- A woman who needs treatment for breast or cervical cancer and who has been diagnosed through the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program;
- A person who is aged (over 65);
- A person who is blind or disabled;
- Certain Medicare beneficiaries; or
- A person who meets Social Security disability requirements and is employed.

To get help from most Medicaid programs, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or a legal qualified alien.
- Live in Iowa.
- Provide a social security number or proof of application for a number.
- Meet income and resource limits (these vary from program to program).\*
- Provide all information needed to determine eligibility and benefit level.
- Cooperate by providing information about other health insurance or benefits, and by providing requested information to the department's Quality Control and Child Support Recovery Units.

*\*We look at all earned and unearned income, and then check for any deductions that can be subtracted from the income. There is no resource limit for children under age 19. For adults, the resource limit varies by program.*

#### **How AmeriCorps\*VISTA and AmeriCorps is counted for Medicaid**

For FMAP-related Medicaid (children, parents with children, and pregnant women):

The living allowance payments for AmeriCorps\*VISTA participants are exempt as income and a resource, so long as the Director of ACTION determines that the value of such payments is less than minimum wage.

Payments made to participants in other AmeriCorps programs are considered as follows:

- Living allowances (stipends) are counted as earned income. Normal earned income deductions and diversions are allowed.

- Child care allowances are exempt as income.
- Educational awards are exempt as income and a resource.
- Health insurance, reasonable accommodations, supplies and services made available to participants with disabilities are exempt as income and a resource.

For SSI-related Medicaid (people 65 year old or older and disabled people):

- Stipends or living allowance payments are considered wages. Normal earned income deductions and diversions are allowed.
- Educational awards or payments made as an alternative to educational awards are wages.
- Clothing allowance payments are unearned income.
- Any food or shelter received by the participant is unearned income in the form of in-kind support and maintenance.

## **2. IowaCare**

To be eligible for IowaCare, you must:

- Be 19 or older
- Be a U.S. citizen or a legal qualified alien.
- Live in Iowa.
- Provide a social security number or proof of application for a number.
- Meet income limits of no more than 200% of the federal poverty level, which is now \$1,805 a month for a single person
- Provide all information needed to determine eligibility and benefit level.
- Have no other full health insurance coverage

IowaCare provides limited health care services. All IowaCare members may receive these services at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City. IowaCare members who are residents of Polk County may also receive medical services at Broadlawns Medical Center.

## C. Family Investment Program (FIP)

### FIP Overview

The FIP program provides temporary cash assistance to families with children. A family must meet financial and nonfinancial eligibility criteria to be eligible for FIP. Federal law limits how long a person can get FIP to a total of 60 months (five years); there are some exceptions to this policy.

Families must work with PROMISE JOBS to get a FIP check. PROMISE JOBS is a work and training program that helps the family become self-sufficient.

FIP eligibility and benefits are determined based on the size of family, the family's income and the family's resources.

The resource limit for FIP is \$2,000 for applicants and \$5,000 for participants.

The income limits for FIP are:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Test 1</u> Gross income	\$675.25	\$1330.15	\$1570.65	\$1824.10	\$2020.20	\$2249.60	\$2469.75
<u>Test 2</u> Income after 20% deduction	\$365	\$716	\$849	\$986	\$1092	\$1216	\$1335
<u>Test 3</u> Income after 58% deduction- (this is also the maximum FIP Grant)	\$183	\$361	\$426	\$495	\$548	\$610	\$670

If a family has unearned income (social security, unemployment benefits, etc.), the grant is reduced dollar for dollar by the amount of the unearned income.

If a family has earned income, earned income deductions are subtracted from the gross earnings and the remaining net income is subtracted from the FIP grant. Effective 8/1/07, the earned income deductions will be a 20% deduction + a 58% deduction.

For example: A family of 3 with no other income receives a FIP grant of \$426. The parent begins working 20 hours per week for \$10.00 per hour.

20 hours x \$10 x 4 weeks = \$800 per month gross earnings.

\$800.00	
<u>-\$160.00</u>	20% deduction
\$640.00	
<u>-\$371.20</u>	58% deduction
\$268.80	countable net income
\$426.00	basic FIP grant for a family of 3
<u>-\$268.80</u>	countable net income
\$157.20	rounded to a \$157 FIP grant

In addition to the \$800 gross earnings and the \$157 FIP grant, the family will likely be eligible for the federal and state earned income tax credits (EITC).

#### **How AmeriCorps\*VISTA and AmeriCorps is counted for FIP**

The living allowance payments for AmeriCorps\*VISTA participants are exempt as income and a resource, so long as the Director of ACTION determines that the value of such payments is less than minimum wage.

Payments made to participants in other AmeriCorps programs are considered as follows:

- Living allowances (stipends) are counted as earned income. Normal earned income deductions and diversions are allowed.
- Child care allowances are exempt as income.
- Educational awards are exempt as income and a resource.
- Health insurance, reasonable accommodations, supplies and services made available to participants with disabilities are exempt as income and a resource.

#### **How AmeriCorps\*VISTA and AmeriCorps is counted for PROMISE JOBS**

The actual hours of participation in an AmeriCorps program count as PROMISE JOBS participation:

- Employment if the living allowance is considered earned income for FIP purposes, or,
- Unpaid Community Service if the living allowance is exempt as income and a resource for FIP purposes (i.e. the payments made in the AmeriCorps\*VISTA program when the Director of ACTION has determined that the value of such payments is less than minimum wage).

## D. Child Care Assistance (CCA)

### CCA eligibility is determined based on

- Age
- Family size
- Income
- Need for service

### Age

To meet age requirements:

- Children must be under age 13
- 13 up to age 19 if the child has special needs or
- 13 up to age 16 if there are special family circumstances that put the safety and well being of the child at risk if left home alone. (The parent must apply for an exception to policy.)

### Family size and gross monthly income limits

Family Size	Basic Care	Special Needs
1 member	\$1309	\$1806
2 members	\$1762	\$2430
3 members	\$2213	\$3052
4 members	\$2665	\$3676
5 members	\$3118	\$4300
6 members	\$3568	\$4992
7 members	\$4021	\$5546

### Countable Income

Both earned and unearned income is used to determine eligibility.

- Living allowance stipends from the AmeriCorps program are countable income for CCA.
- Living allowance stipends paid to AmeriCorps\*VISTA members are excluded as income, as long as the director of ACTION determines the value of all such payments is less than minimum wage.
- Educational awards, health insurance, reasonable accommodations, supplies and services made available to participants with disabilities are exempt as income for CCA.
- Child care allowances are exempt as income if they are a reimbursement to the family. Child care allowances are countable as income if the payment is not a reimbursement.

NOTE: Families applying for child care who are on FIP or because of a protective need do not have to meet the income guidelines, but must have a need for service.

### Co-pay Fees

A family may be responsible for paying for part of the child care costs. This is called a co-pay. The family's co-pay is based on family size, gross income, and the number of children in care. Families receiving child care because they are FIP recipients or because of protective needs do not have a co-pay.

### **Need for Service**

The family must have a need for child care services to be eligible for CCA. All parents in the household must meet at least one of the need requirements in its entirety. Needs for service include:

- Full time academic or vocational training
- Employed 28 or more hours per week
- Child protection
- Medical absence or incapacity
- Seeking employment (limited to one 3—consecutive-day period in any 12-month period)
- FIP recipient participating in PROMISE JOBS activities

AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*VISTA members meet need for service when they:

- Volunteer 28 or more hours per week. These members are considered to be meeting the **employment** need for service.
- Participate in the PROMISE JOBS program and have AmeriCorps written into their FIA. These members meet the **PROMISE JOBS activity** need for service, regardless of the number of hours they volunteer.

AmeriCorps\*VISTA members who receive CCA immediately prior to becoming a VISTA volunteer **continue to meet need for service** and can continue receiving CCA as long as they meet all other CCA eligibility requirements.

### **AmeriCorps Childcare Benefits through First Financial Associates**

AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps\*VISTA members who were not CCA recipients immediately prior to becoming a VISTA volunteer must apply for the child care benefit provided for members through First Financial Associates and enroll in the program if eligible.

- Households who are eligible for First Financial Associates child care benefits are not eligible for CCA.
- Households who do not show proof of application for AmeriCorps childcare benefits through First Financial Associates are not eligible for CCA.