



Special Attention of:

## NOTICE PDR-2026-02

Regional Directors, Field Office Directors,  
Economists, Public & Indian Housing  
Division Directors, Multifamily Hub Directors,  
Multifamily Program Center Directors

Issued: May 1, 2026  
Expires: Effective until superseded

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Cross References:

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Subject: Transmittal of Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Income Limits  
for the Public Housing and Section 8 Programs

### Introduction

This notice transmits income limits used to define the terms “very low-income”, “low-income”, and “extremely low-income” in accordance with Section 3(b)(2) of the United States Housing Act of 1937, as amended. These income limits are listed by dollar amount and family size, and they are effective on the later of May 1, 2026, or the date issued.

HUD Section 8 income limits begin with the calculation of median family incomes for each area. HUD uses the Section 8 program’s Fair Market Rent (FMR) area definitions in developing medians, which means that median family incomes are developed for each metropolitan area, parts of some metropolitan areas, and each nonmetropolitan county. For FY 2026, HUD uses the same geographic definitions as FY 2025, which are based on metropolitan statistical area definitions published by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on July 21, 2023.<sup>1</sup>

HUD uses the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) and Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS) median family income data (as opposed to household income data) as the basis of FY 2026 income limits for all areas of geography, except for the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Pacific Islands (American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands). HUD inflates median family income estimates from the time of the survey to FY 2026 using the most recent projected change in national per capita wages published by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). The inflation factor, representing the projected change in national per capita wages from CY 2024 through FY 2026, is approximately 1.055 (a 5.5 percent increase).

Since FY 2010<sup>2</sup> HUD has limited annual decreases in the low- and very low-income limits to five percent, and all annual increases to the greater of five percent or twice the change in the national median

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<sup>1</sup> OMB Bulletin No. 23-01.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to FY 2010, HUD maintained a “hold harmless” policy, whereby Section 8 income limits for certain areas were held at previously published levels when reductions would otherwise have resulted from changes in housing cost, median income, or income limit methodologies, or changes in metropolitan area definitions.

family income. Starting in FY 2024, HUD specified that the cap should be measured using the annual change in the unadjusted national median family income subject to an absolute cap of 10 percent. HUD first announced this methodology on January 10, 2024 in a [Federal Register Notice](#). For 2026, the annual change measured by the ACS from 2023 to 2024 is approximately 5.045 percent. Twice this change is approximately 10.09 percent, which exceeds the ten percent absolute cap. So, for FY 2026, the income limits “cap” is 10.0 percent.

HUD bases the median family incomes and income limits for the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Pacific Islands on 2020 Decennial Census data which is the most current information available. The decennial data for the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Pacific Islands reports 2019 median family incomes. HUD trends these incomes forward using the change in national median family incomes between 2019 and 2024 (from the ACS). HUD then applies the same national per capita wages inflation adjustment used in ACS areas from CY 2024 to FY 2026.

Starting in FY 2023 and continuing for FY 2026, because the overall median family income in Puerto Rico is very low, at less than one third of the national median family income, HUD began raising the extremely low-income limits to the value of the very low-income limits within the territory to expand the number of families who are eligible for targeted assistance in HUD’s rental assistance programs.

Public Housing/Section 8 income limits are used to determine the income eligibility of applicants for Public Housing, Section 8, and other programs subject to 42 USC 1437a(b)(2). The income limits are calculated from the HUD medians for FY 2026.

The most important statutory provisions relating to income limits are as follows:

- very low-income family is defined as low-income families whose incomes do not exceed 50 percent of the median family income for the area, subject to specified adjustments for areas with unusually high or low incomes relative to housing costs;
- low-income family is defined as those families whose incomes do not exceed 80 percent of the median family income for the area, subject to adjustments for areas with unusually high or low incomes relative to housing costs;
- extremely low-income family is defined as a very low-income family whose income does not exceed the higher of the poverty guidelines as determined by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or 30 percent of the median family income for the area;
- where the area income limits would otherwise be less than those derived from the state nonmetropolitan median, income limits are based on the state nonmetropolitan median; and
- income limits are adjusted for family size so that larger families have higher income limits.

### **Very Low-Income Limits:**

HUD calculates very low-income limits using a set of formulae as follows. The first step in calculating very low-income limits is to determine what they would be if the four-person limit is based on

50 percent of the median family income. HUD then adjusts this number if it is outside formula constraints.

Specifically, HUD calculates the very low-income limit for a four-person family as follows:

- (1) HUD calculates and sets 50 percent of the area median family income as the preliminary four-person family income limit;
- (2) HUD increases the four-person very low-income limit if it would otherwise be less than the amount at which 35 percent of it equals 85 percent of the annualized two-bedroom FMR. This adjusts income limits upward for areas where rental housing costs are unusually high in relation to the median family income;
- (3) HUD reduces the four-person very low-income limit to the greater of 80 percent of the U.S. median family income level, or the amount at which 30 percent of a four-person family's income equals 100 percent of the two-bedroom FMR. This adjusts income limits downward for areas with unusually high median family income relative to housing costs;
- (4) HUD increases the four-person income limit if it is less than 50 percent of the relevant state nonmetropolitan median family income level;<sup>3</sup> and
- (5) HUD increases the four-person income limit if it is less than 95 percent of last year's very low-income limit and reduces to the greater of 105 percent of last year's very low-income limit or to a level representing twice the rate of change in the unadjusted national median family income estimate if that amount would be larger than five percent, subject to an absolute cap of 10 percent. For FY 2026 income limits, twice the annualized increase in the unadjusted national median family income as measured from the 2023 to 2024 ACS is approximately 10.09 percent, so the cap on increases is set at 10.0 percent.

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<sup>3</sup> Under a Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 amendment, nonmetropolitan area income limits should never be set lower than the State nonmetropolitan median family income level. In implementing this provision, HUD used its discretion to apply this policy to metropolitan areas as well. Doing so avoids the anomaly of assigning higher income limits to a nonmetropolitan county than are assigned to a metropolitan area where the median family income is less than the State non-metro level but above the level for the non-metro county.

### Low-Income Limits:

Most four-person low-income limits are the greater of 80 percent of the median family income, or 80 percent of the state nonmetropolitan median family income. Because HUD does not always base the very low-income limits on 50 percent of median, however, calculating low-income limits as 80 percent of median would produce anomalies inconsistent with statutory intent (e.g., very low-income limits could be higher than low-income limits). To address this, HUD generally sets the four-person low-income limit at 1.6 (i.e., 80 percent/50 percent) times the relevant four-person very low-income limit. There are two exceptions to this practice: first, the four-person low-income limit may not exceed the U.S. median family income (\$106,800 for FY 2026), except when justified by high housing costs; and, second, once adjusted, HUD limits decreases in the four-person low-income limit to five percent, and caps increases at the greater of five percent or twice the annualized change in the unadjusted national median family income as measured from the 2023 to 2024 ACS, which is approximately 10.09 percent. Starting in FY 2024, increases have been subject to an absolute cap of 10 percent. For FY 2026, income limit increases are capped at 10.0 percent. Use of very low-income limits as a starting point for calculating other income limits has the effect of adjusting low-income limits in areas where the very low-income limits have been adjusted because of unusually high or low housing-cost-to-income relationships.

### Extremely Low-Income Limits:

HUD calculates the extremely low-income limits for all areas in the U.S. with the exception of U.S. territories using the 2026 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia (Lower-48 States), for Alaska, and for Hawaii. These poverty guidelines were published in the *Federal Register* by HHS on January 15, 2026.<sup>4</sup> HUD first calculates extremely low-income limits as 30/50ths (60 percent) of the Section 8 very low-income limits. HUD then compares these to the appropriate poverty guideline and if the poverty guideline is higher, HUD chooses that value. If the poverty guideline is above the very low-income limit at that family size, the extremely low-income limit is set at the very low-income limit because the definition of extremely low-income limits caps them at the very low-income levels.

### Family Size Adjustments:

By statute, family size adjustments are required to provide higher income limits for larger families and lower income limits for smaller families. HUD applies the factors shown below to the very low-income limits and the low-income limits, but not the extremely low-income limits set at the poverty income threshold, as follows:

#### Number of Persons in Family and Percentage Adjustments

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>
70%	80%	90%	Base	108%	116%	124%	132%

HUD does not include income limits for families with more than eight persons in the printed lists because of space limitations. For each person over eight persons, the four-person income limit should be

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/01/15/2026-00755/annual-update-of-the-hhs-poverty-guidelines>

multiplied by an additional eight percent. (For example, the nine-person limit equals 140 percent [132 + 8] of the relevant four-person income limit.) Income limits are rounded up to the nearest \$50, unless rounding up would cause the year-to-year change in income limits to exceed the cap. Local agencies may round income limits for nine or more persons to the nearest \$50, or they may use the un-rounded numbers.

Due to the inclusion of the federal poverty guidelines, these family size adjustments described above are not sufficient to determine the level of extremely low-income limits. The poverty guidelines have fixed dollar amount adjustments between household sizes (different for Alaska and Hawaii than the rest of the U.S.). Therefore, the actual amounts shown for 1- to 8-person families will not necessarily follow the percentages shown above. For families with more than eight persons, HUD has developed a tool that should be used to calculate the extremely low-income limit for that area at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html>. Please use the FY 2026 Income Limits Documentation system, pick the area in question, and click the button to view the calculations. Then select “Click for More Detail” under the label “Extremely Low-Income Limits.” Near the bottom of the explanations, there is a drop-down box to select the number of household members needed (from 9 to 25).

FY 2026 income limits are available in multiple formats at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html>. Questions related to how these income limits apply to the programs of state and other federal agencies should be referred to those agencies. Questions concerning the methodology used to develop these income limits are addressed in the [FY 2026 Income Limits Methodology](#), or the documentation system for income limits and median family income, which are on the income limits website.

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