

**Workforce Development Division  
Workforce Program Policy  
Technical Assistance Bulletin 280, Change 1**

**Keyword:** Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act  
**Subject:** Determining High-Poverty Geographic Areas  
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This Technical Assistance (TA) Bulletin provides Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with information on determining and documenting high-poverty areas in support of low-income eligibility criteria for in-school and out-of-school youth.

**Background**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth Program has a provision that allows in-school and out-of-school youth living in high-poverty areas to meet the low-income eligibility criterion automatically. WIOA §129(a)(2) and Title 20 Code of Federal Regulations §681.260 define a high-poverty area as a census tract, a set of contiguous census tracts, an American Indian reservation, other tribal land as defined by the Secretary of Labor in guidance, or a county that has a poverty rate of at least 25 percent as set every five years using American Community Survey five-year data.

**Determining Whether Youth Are Living in a High-Poverty Area**

On March 2, 2017, the US Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration issued Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) [No. 21-16](#), titled “Third Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance,” with two attachments, the second of which is titled “[Instructions for Using Census Data to Determine High-Poverty Geographic Areas](#).”

The US Census Bureau publishes the American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates each December. The ACS data define the estimated poverty rates along with other demographic data. Poverty rates may be filtered by census tracts or geographical subunits. Census tracts or geographical subunits may be filtered again by state, metropolitan statistical area, city, county, independent school district, and more refined census tracts.

During the period between the enactment of WIOA and the issuance of TEGL 21-16, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) provided Boards with the ACS five-year “High-Poverty Areas in Texas by County,” which is found on TWC’s [Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act](#) web page under the WIOA Eligibility heading.

TEGL 21-16, Attachment 2, provides detailed instructions for evaluating census data and identifying poverty areas using the ACS. The [interactive tool](#) on the US Census Bureau’s website helps Boards determine whether counties, census tracts, or a combination of census tracts meet or exceed the 25 percent threshold designating that geographical area as a high-poverty area.

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