

Policy Number: ERSEA 001	Title: Eligibility
Performance Standard: 1302.12	Original Date: 5/16/2011,11/17/16 Reviewed: 5/2020 DB, 10/2020
	Policy Council Approval/Revision: 5/17/11 1/2018, 9/2018,5/2020, 12/2020 BOE Approval: 5/2020, 10/2020
USD 418 BOE Policy:	

POLICY:

The McPherson/Marion County Head Start Program will ensure that Head Start eligibility rules are adhered to as it relates to recruiting and enrolling children into the program while ensuring staff and governing bodies are trained and records are maintained in accordance with Head Start regulations.

Eligibility will be determined according to Head Start Performance Standards as outlined in section-1302.12 and guidance provided in OHS-PC-1-008. Children are eligible for Head Start placement if the family meets the income limit of 100-130% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. At least 51 percent of the program's participants are either income or categorically eligible for children placed will be over 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines with 10 percent reserved for children with diagnosed disabilities.

Eligibility records will be maintained while the child is enrolled and for a year after. These files will be locked and placed in a confidential location.

Head Start Staff who intentionally falsify an applicant's income or income eligibility form in any manner to ensure a child is enrolled in the Head Start program who does not meet the income eligible guidelines will be subject to the following actions under the USD 418 district policy on falsifying information.

PROCEDURE:

ELIGIBILITY:

A child must be three or four years old on or before August 31 of the current or upcoming program year; and be no older than the age required to attend school.

Head Start Staff who job responsibilities include recruitment and facilitating applications for the Head Start program are required as of March 12, 2015 to adhere to the following Head Start Rules and Provisions:

- Staff may conduct telephone interviews when the family and the Head Start staff are in a rural area that does not permit ease of access to the family. The Family Services staff (Family Advocate and/or Assistant Director for Family and Community Services) will make all attempts to meet the family. The Assistant Director for Family and Community Services and/or Head Start Director will determine when a family is outside of the geographic parameters to facilitate an in person interview for application to the Head Start program. Family Advocates are required to gain approval to conduct a phone

interview from the Assistant Director for Family and Community Services.

- An eligibility determination record must be created for each participant.
- An eligibility determination record includes: copies of documents used to verify eligibility; statement that program staff has made reasonable efforts to verify information; statement that identifies determination (i.e. income or categorically eligible). The Applicant Funding Eligibility Information Worksheet will be completed and signed by the parent/legal guardian and Head Start Staff. For each student the Eligibility Verification Worksheet will be completed and signed by the Assistant Director for Family and Community Services. Categorically eligible is defined by Head Start: child is homeless, in foster care, SSI (Social Security Income) is received by a family member or Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) is received by the family. Acceptable documentation to prove the family is categorically eligible: court order, other legal document or government issued document; written statement from official homeless provider, school personnel; or any other document.
- Homelessness verification: staff must describe efforts made to verify the child is homeless; and, describe the child's living situation and the specific conditions under the homeless definition.
- A child is eligible for Migrant or Seasonal Head Start if the family is income eligible or, the family is categorically eligible; and, the family's income comes primarily from agricultural work.
- Income is verified by Family Advocates through collecting and reviewing W-2 forms, pay stubs, or pay envelopes for the relevant time period, state the family income and document if the family qualifies as low-income. Documentation of the family's income will be retained by the Head Start program in a file separate for those students currently enrolled; from the child's for as long as the child is enrolled and for one year after they stop receiving services or no longer enrolled. If the family reports no income staff may accept a written declaration to that effect if staff: describe efforts made to verify income; and, explains how the family's income was calculated; or, seeks information from third parties, if the family consents, which includes third party's name, title, and affiliation to the applicant
- Eligibility worksheet is created and reviewed annually by the Head Start administrators, staff, policy council and governing board.
- Income eligibility requirements outlined a child is eligible when the family's income is equal to or below the poverty line; or, the family is eligible for public assistance. Public Assistance is defined by Head Start as TANF or SSI.
- The program may enroll up to 10% of their enrollment with over-income families.
- A child must be at least 3 years old or, turn 3 years old by the public school districts eligibility date where the Head Start program is located; and not be older than the age required to attend school.
- Program may enroll an additional 35% of participants whose families do not meet a criterion described in the eligibility requirements (1302.12 (c)) of this section whose income is below 130% of the poverty guidelines if the program establishes and implements policies and procedures to ensure that eligible children and families and children with disabilities are served prior to those who do not meet the criteria in 1302.12 (c) and ensure that eligible children are served first.
- When serving families whose income is between 100-130% of the poverty line, the

program demonstrates how it meets the needs of categorically eligible children outlining the demographic data on these populations; outreach efforts are explained in policy ERSEA 001.

Eligibility records must be maintained as long as the child is enrolled and for one year after they are no longer receiving services. The program must provide eligibility training for staff.

Parents not providing complete documentation needed for determining eligibility will be counseled by the Family Advocates and/or Family and Community Services Coordinator.

All staff who recruit and complete family applications for the Head Start program are required to be trained within 90 days of March 12, 2015 and within 90 days of employment as it relates to the Head Start Eligibility Final Rule which went into effect March 12, 2015.

Governing bodies such as the school board and policy council must be trained in the Head Start Eligibility Final Rule that went into effect March 12, 2015 within 180 days.