

Policy Number: ERSEA 001	Title: Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, Attendance
Performance Standard: 1302.12-1302.16, 1302.18,1302.70	Original Date: 5/16/2011,11/17/16 Reviewed: 2/2023 SC
	Policy Council Approval/Revision: 5/17/11 1/2018, 9/2018,5/2020, 05/2023 BOE Approval: 5/2020, 04/2023
USD 418 BOE Policy:	

POLICY:

Eligibility and enrollment will be determined according to Head Start Performance Standards as outlined in section-1302.12-1302.16, 1302.18, 1302.70, and guidance provided in OHS-PC-1-008. Children are income eligible for Head Start placement if the family meets the income limit of below 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. In addition, up to 35% of students may be considered eligible for Head Start placement if the family income is between 100-130% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Another additional 10% of enrolled students can be placed as Head Start eligible with a family income over 130% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Children are categorically eligible for Head Start if the student is in foster care, the family receives Public Assistance in the form of SNAP, TANF, or Supplemental Security Income, or if the child meets the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness.

At least 51 percent of the program's participants must be either income or categorically eligible for Head Start. A minimum of 10 percent of children placed as Head Start will be reserved for children with diagnosed disabilities.

Recruitment for Head Start is ongoing using a variety of methods for community outreach. Order of selection will be based on the most current ranking according to the McPherson/Marion County Head Start Priority Eligibility Criteria that is updated yearly based on the community needs assessment and the Early Childhood self-assessment.

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.

PROCEDURE:

ELIGIBILITY:

At the time of application, a copy of income verification must accompany the application documents if the family would like to be considered for Head Start placement. The time period used to verify family income is the preceding calendar year or the twelve months prior to the month the application is filed. A copy of the following may serve as eligibility or income verification:

- DCF document stating the amount of cash assistance (TANF) or food assistance (SNAP) the family receives per month, Supplemental Security Income award letter, Federal Form 1040 (income tax), paycheck stub, written statement from employer including wages expected to earn in one calendar year. If the family

reports no income for the relevant time period, the family can provide a signed declaration, and program staff describe efforts made to verify the family's income. If the family reports homelessness, the family can provide a signed declaration or provide documentation from a public or private agency, or notes from the application interview may be used to determine if the child is homeless. Documentation for homelessness can be secured from the family in writing and signed by the family if no other agency is available. Third party verification must be in writing and signed.

- If a family provides consent to contact a third-party, staff must adhere to program privacy policies and procedures. . If the child is in foster care a court order, legal document, government-issued document, or child welfare official can provide proof of foster care.
- In addition, when the family is eligible for or, in the absence of childcare, potentially eligible for public assistance a child can be considered for the 10% over income placement. Interviews may happen over the telephone when an in-person interview is not possible.

Once eligible for USD 418 McPherson/Marion Head Start, the child remains eligible through the end of the succeeding program year except when the program chooses not to enroll the child when there are compelling reasons for the child not to remain in Head Start.

Eligibility will be verified by the Family Advocate conducting the eligibility interview, and re-verified by the Family and Community Services Coordinator. This two-step process will be used for all applications to ensure only eligible students are enrolled. All 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 any staff that will be conducting applications and eligibility interviews.

Consistent with the text of the Head Start amended 2007, 645 (a), consideration of information that most accurately reflects the needs of the family is permitted. If neither the last 12 months nor the preceding calendar year accurately represents the family's situation at the time of application, then Head Start program Family and Community Services Coordinator may use their judgment in deciding if it seems likely that the current situation more accurately reflects the family's likely economic status during the period of the child's Head Start enrollment.

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

Required documentation for the application process includes the child's immunization records, medical insurance coverage, if applicable, and verification of income.

Verification of age is required and can be met through one of the following options: birth certificate, live birth record, or court order. When and if needed, the program can pay for a copy of the birth certificate.

Any applications that are not completed or do not have the required documentation will not be considered for enrollment until they are completed. If income verification is not turned in the child cannot be verified for a funded slot and will be placed on a waitlist until the necessary documentation is received. If the family cannot provide a birth certificate- the McPherson/Marion Program will assist in obtaining the birth certificate, but it will not affect the ability for the child to be enrolled.

RECRUITMENT:

Recruitment is ongoing. A request to apply may be made through the prospective client's local school or the Early Childhood Office. Recruitment methods used are flyers, posters in local businesses, newspaper advertisements, information page on the local cable community calendar, articles in local elementary school newsletters, recruitment brochures at local businesses, local elementary schools, information given at local monthly screening events, DCF eligibility reports, and application/recruitment fairs, and social media.

A Family Advocate will arrange a time to meet with the prospective family to complete the application interview and compile the necessary documentation for consideration for enrollment. The application interview will take place at the Early Childhood Office, in the elementary building or in a safe neutral meeting place.

SELECTION:

The Family and Community Services Coordinator will determine enrollment status based on ranking of available slots for the current or upcoming program year. The program must not deny enrollment based on disability or chronic health conditions or its severity. The application will be prioritized using the USD 418 Early Childhood Head Start Eligibility Criteria, that is revised annually based on the Community Needs Assessment and approved by the Policy Council and Board of Education.

Applications will be pulled from this group until enough children are selected for the funded slots available. Selection will adhere to the enrollment policy below.

ENROLLMENT:

At least 51 percent of the children who are enrolled must meet the current Federal Poverty Guidelines or be categorically eligible. Up to 10 percent of children who are enrolled may be children from families that exceed the Federal Poverty Guidelines, but who meet the selection criteria used to determine children who would benefit from Head Start services. Up to 35 percent of children enrolled may be between 101 and 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. A minimum of 10 percent of slots will be reserved for children professionally diagnosed with disabilities. A program must fill a vacancy within 30 days and must maintain its funded enrollment. Those students who are funded through funds outside of head start are not considered part of the funded enrollment number.

When a recruitment application is received which indicates a disability, documentation verifying the diagnosis, through evaluation or testing must accompany the recruitment form.

Required documentation for enrollment includes current physical and dental exam, and up to date immunizations and must comply with state policy.