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| **Policy Number:** ERSEA009 | **Title:** Eligibility Rules |
| **Performance Standard:** 1305.4 | **Original Date:** 4/14/15 |
| **Policy Council Approval/Revision:** 4/2015 |

**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 ensure staff and governing bodies are trained and records are maintained in accordance with Head Start regulations.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. 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). Categorically eligible is defined by Head Start: child is homeless or in foster care. 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 from the child’s. 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.
* Eligibility worksheet is created and reviewed annually by the Head Start administrators, staff, policy council and governing board.
* Income eligibility requirements outline 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.

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.

Head Start Staff who intentionally falsifies 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 which is to follow USD418 policy.