

<b>Policy Number:</b> ERSEA 009	<b>Title:</b> Eligibility Rules
<b>Performance Standard:</b> 1302.12	<b>Original Date:</b> 4/14/15 <b>Reviewed Date:</b> 2/14/2023 SC
	<b>Policy Council Approval/Revision:</b> 4/2015, 2/2018, 5/2023 <b>BOE Approval:</b> 4/2015, 2/2018,5/2023

**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.

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 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 an internal investigation. The result of this investigation could include correction up to termination of employment..

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Head Start Staff whose 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:
  - a. 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 Family and Community Services Coordinator) will make all attempts to meet the family. The Family and Community Services Coordinator 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 Family and Community Services Coordinator.
  - b. An eligibility determination record must be created for each participant.
  - c. 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 Family and Community Services Coordinator.

- d. Categorical eligibility is defined by Head Start as: child is homeless, in foster care, or the family receives Public Assistance in the form of SSI (Supplemental Security Income), Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) or Food Assistance (SNAP).
  - e. Acceptable documentation to prove the family is categorically eligible includes: court order, other legal document or government issued document, school personnel, information recorded in the interview notes, SNAP award letter, TANF award letter, SSI award letter; or any other document approved by the Family and Community Services Coordinator.
  - f. Homelessness verification: Signed statement of services from an outside organization providing housing assistance, signed statement from those co-living with the student's family (in the case of doubling up). Staff must describe efforts made to verify that the child is homeless and describe the child's living situation and the specific conditions under the homeless definition.
2. 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.
  3. Income is verified by Family Advocates through collecting and reviewing W-2 forms, pay stubs, or pay envelopes for the relevant time period. The Family Advocate will state the family income and document if the family qualifies as income eligible. Eligibility determination records will be kept for as long as the child is enrolled and for one year after they stop receiving services or are no longer enrolled.
  4. 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
  5. Eligibility worksheet is created and reviewed annually by the Head Start administrators, staff, policy council and governing board.
  6. 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 SNAP, TANF, or SSI.
  7. The program may enroll up to 10% of their enrollment with over-income families.
  8. 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.
  9. 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.

10. 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.