Procedure1-13

**CHILD & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

**Community Action Team**

Head Start Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, and Enrollment Procedure

The following procedure ensures program staff adheres to all Federal Performance Standards, regulations, and program policies regarding recruitment, selection, and enrollment.

**Process Overview:**

To ensure that staff treat families, the public and colleagues with dignity and respect, a culture of respect and dignity which values culture and individuality is maintained through:

* + Conveying and communicating acceptance of values and lifestyle.
  + Promoting positive interaction between parties.
  + Involving all present and encouraging members to fully participate.
  + Listening and responding appropriately to concerns, comments and suggestions.

Staff will recruit children ages 3-4 years. Applications will be accepted for children ages 3-4 yearson or beforeSeptember 1st. The main recruitment drive will be held from April 1 to September 1. Applications will be accepted from all families within the recruitment area and each family will receive an in-person interview.

New applications will be accepted throughout the year. From the first scheduled program class day through March 31st, an in-person interview visit will be completed within 30-days of receiving an age eligible application and they will be added to the waiting list.

First priority will be to enroll children from low income families or categorically eligible (TANF, Foster, Homeless). Second priority will be to enroll children from families with income below 130% Federal Poverty level as outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007. Ten percent of enrollment opportunities will be made available to children with disabilities.

When a current staff member applies for enrollment for their child, the Area Supervisor will complete the recruitment home visit and verify income. The recruitment information will be submitted to the Associate Director for income verification monitoring. The Associate Director will forward the application for data entry and the family will be placed on the wait list. This takes the process of enrolling HS employee/families out of the center and ensures integrity.

The Center Manager is responsible to ensure that residency, age, and income/categorical eligibility are verified and ensure an eligibility determination record is maintained. Residency, age and income must be verified before a child is determined eligible and before a child is selectedorenrolled in Head Start. An Administration staff must review and sign-off on eligibility information prior to selection each applicant.

**Procedure:**

Staff must:

* 1. Conduct an in-person interview with each family.
  2. Verify age, income, categorical eligibility, residency; and
  3. Create an eligibility determination record for each enrolled participant.

Interview: Social Service staff will schedule in-person enrollment interviews with all families who submit child applications. The in-person interviews will be scheduled for times that are best for the applying family. If an in-person center interview poses a burden for families, staff may interview the family in the families’ home. If conducting the in-person interview in the family’s home poses a burden for families, staff may interview families over the telephone. In addition to meeting the criteria provided in this procedure, program staff must document in the eligibility determination record reasons why the in-person interview was not possible.

Verifying age: Staff must verify a child’s age by reviewing documents that confirm a child’s age. If collecting age verification documents creates a barrier for the families to enroll the child, staff will document the reason in the file and report age verification as “Parent Report”.

A child must:

1. Be at least three years old; or,
2. Turn three years old by the date used to determine eligibility for public school; and,
3. Not be age eligible for public school.

Verify residency: Staff will verify the applying child/family resides within the program service area.

Verify income/categorical eligibility: Income must be verified by staff for the relevant time period following ACF Definitions for income. Families identified as categorically eligible must be verified as such using the appropriate documentation. All documentation and methodology used to verify eligibility will be maintained in the child file and may be kept electronically as outlined in the Records section below.

Income eligibility requirements:

1. A child is eligible if:
   * 1. The family’s income is equal to or below the poverty line, or
     2. The family is eligible for public assistance.
2. If the family’s income is above the poverty line, the program may enroll a child who would benefit from the services. These participants can only make up to 10 percent of the program’s enrollment.

Verifying income:

1. If the family can provide all W-2 forms, pay stubs, or pay envelopes for the relevant time period, staff must:
   1. Use all family income for the relevant time period to determine eligibility according to income guidelines:
   2. State the family income for the relevant time period to determine eligibility according to income guidelines;
   3. State whether the child qualifies as low-income.
2. If the family cannot provide all W-2 forms, pay stubs, or pay envelopes for the relevant time period, staff may accept written statement from employers for the relevant time period and use information provided to calculate total annual income with appropriate multipliers.
3. If the family reports no income for the relevant time period, the program may:
   1. Accept the family’s signed declaration to that effect, staff must;
      1. Describe efforts made to verify the family’s income; and,
      2. Explains how the family’s total income was calculated; or,
      3. Seeks information from third parties about the family’s eligibility, if the family gives written consent. If a family gives consent to contact third parties, program staff must ensure the eligibility determination record adheres to the Records section of this procedure.
4. If the family can demonstrate a significant change in income for the relevant time period, program staff may consider current income circumstances.

Categorical eligibility requirements:

1. A family is categorically eligible for Head Start, if:
2. The child is homeless, as defined in 1305.2; or
3. The child is in foster care, as defined in 1305.2.
4. The family is eligible for public assistance: TANF.
5. If the program determines a child is categorically eligible as homeless, it must allow the child to attend a Head Start program, without immunization and other medical records, proof of residency, birth certificates, or other documents. The program must give the family reasonable time to present these documents.

Verifying categorical eligibility.

1. A family can prove categorical eligibility, with:
2. A court order or other legal or government-issued document or a written statement from a government child welfare official demonstrating the child is in foster care;
3. A written statement from a homeless service provider, school personnel, or other service agency attesting that the child is homeless or any other documentation that indicates homelessness, including documentation from a public or private agency, a declaration, information gathered on enrollment or application forms, or notes from an interview with staff to establish the child is homeless.
4. Any other document that established categorical eligibility.
5. If a family can provide one of the documents described in the paragraph above, program staff must:
6. Describe efforts made to verify the accuracy of the information provided; and,
7. State whether the family is categorically eligible.
8. If a family cannot provide one of the documents described in the paragraph above to prove the child is homeless, the program may accept the family’s signed declaration to that effect, if, in a written statement, program staff:
9. Describes the efforts made to verify that a child is homeless, and
10. Describes the child’s living situation, including the specific conditions under which the child was determined to be homeless.
11. Program staff may seek information from third parties who have first-hand knowledge about a family’s categorical eligibility, if the family gives consent. If the family gives consent to contact third parties, program staff must ensure the eligibility determination records include:
    1. The family’s written consent to contact each third party;
    2. The third parties’ name, titles, and affiliations; and
    3. Information from third parties regarding the family’s eligibility that includes a statement that identified whether:
       1. the family’s income is below income guidelines for its size, and lists the family’s size; b) the family is eligible for or, in the absence of child care, potentially eligible for public assistance; c) the child is a homeless child, as defined in the McKinney-Vento act, d) the child is in foster care; e) the family meets income level of 101 – 130 of the Federal poverty line, or f) the family meets the over-income requirements.

**Records**.

Eligibility determination records for participants and on-going training records for staff will be maintained in hard copy format or electronically.

Each eligibility determination record will be maintained in the social service section of the child file and must include:

1. Copies of any documents or statements, including declarations, for income, categorical status, residency, and age that are deemed necessary to verify eligibility.
2. A statement that program staff has made reasonable efforts to verify information by:
3. Conducting either an in-person, or a telephonic interview with the family;
4. Describing efforts made to verify eligibility; and
5. Collecting documents required for third party, that includes:

The family’s written consent to contact each third party;

The third parties’ names, titles, and affiliations; and,

Information from third parties regarding the family’s eligibility.

1. A statement that identified whether:
2. The family’s income is below income guidelines for its size, and lists the family’s size;
3. The family is eligible for or, in the absence of child care, potentially eligible for public assistance;
4. The child is homeless child, as defined at 1305.2 including the specific condition described in 1305.2 under which the child was determined to be homeless;
5. The child is in foster care;
6. The family meets the over-income requirement; or
7. The family meets alterative criteria under paragraph (d) of the verifying income section.

The program must keep eligibility determination records:

1. For those currently enrolled, as long as they are enrolled; and,
2. For one year after they have either stopped receiving services; or,
3. Are no longer enrolled.

**Selection**

1. A waiting list will be maintained with children whose primary residence is in the program’s service areaand children will beprioritized using the Criteria and Rating Form CP 13, enrolling priority one children before priority two children.

1. Form CP 13 will be completed for each family.
2. Center Managers will review waiting list and meet with the area supervisor if there are compelling concerns that are not reflected using form CP13.
3. Children with the highest needs will receive priority on the waiting list.
4. Families with children who meet the age eligibility and are categorically eligible, and children with incomes at 100% or below Federal Poverty level will be selected prior to families with children who meet the age eligibility and with incomes between 101 to 130% of the Federal Poverty level.
5. First age priority for the Home-Based model enrollees will be 3-3.6 years of age; Second age priority for the home-based model enrollees will be over 3.6 years of age up to 4 years old. Prior to enrollment in the home-based model, parents will agree the home environment and everyday routines will be used as the child’s primary learning environment for the home-based model.
6. Center Managers may select up to 80% of eligible first priority children by the end of June, or with Director or designee’s approval, up to 100%.
7. Center Managers should select remaining children prior to August 31st to reach full enrollment.

**Accepted:**

1.Prior to first scheduled program class day: Center Managers will document selection on the CP 2025 report, Enrollment Priority Listing and send for data entry. A selection letter is sent to the family. *Note: Child Plus uses the term accepted to hold enrollment for a child before classroom placement decisions have been determined.*

**Enrollment:** Children from low-income families and categorically eligible children will receive

first priority for enrollment opportunities.

1. A child is enrolled when the child has been accepted. Staff must complete and submit a CP 1 to admin for data entry to generate the enrollment rosters. When completing the CP 1; the enrollment date is the **date the family is accepted**. The entry date is the first day the child is scheduled and expected to attend class. Child Plus uses the term entry to gain the 45/90 day clock.

1. Center Managers will scan CP 1’s to the Office Support Assistant for data entry). The Office Support Assistant will enter the information into Child Plus.
   * + 1. At least 10 percent of the total number of enrollment opportunities will be made available to children with disabilities.
       2. Center Managers must ensure full enrollment on the first program scheduled day of services/class. Enrollment is complete when the family has been accepted.
       3. The program may enroll an additional 35 percent of participants whose families are neither income nor categorically eligible and whose family incomes are below 130 percent of the poverty line,.
       4. The program will continue to enroll children throughout the program year to ensure full enrollment.
       5. Children who are eligible for kindergarten will not be selected unless an interagency agreement outlining services and payment responsibilities is signed by Head Start Director and the School District official. This placement will not take the place of a Head Start slot in the classroom.

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