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POLICY

2019-2020 Head Start/Early Head Start Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance Policy

Area: Program Operations

Subject: PO-A03 Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

Reference: 1302.12, 1302.13, 1302.14, 1302.15, 1302.16, 1302.18

Purpose:

The grantee must have a process in place to appropriately determine eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance of children. Programs must not charge a fee for attendance for Head Start funded services but may charge a fee for State funded services.

Policy:

The following policy will be implemented to meet local needs and provide maximum program awareness in order to recruit, prioritize, select, enroll, and track attendance for children. This will also apply to agencies utilizing State funds for collaborated programs. Each year, this policy will be reviewed and approved by the Stanislaus Head Start and Early Head Start Policy Council and the grantee's Governing Body (JPA). Each delegate agency may establish its own ERSEA policies and enrollment priorities as long as they are in compliance with and do not contradict the grantee's and they receive approval from their delegate Policy Committee, the delegate agency's Governing Body and the grantee.

Policy Guideline:

ELIGIBILITY

Program staff must complete an in-person interview with each family. If an in-person interview is not possible due to family circumstances, staff may conduct the interview over the phone. All documents used to verify eligibility become part of the child's Eligibility Determination Record. Eligibility Determination Records must be kept for all children currently enrolled and for one year after they have either stopped receiving services or are no longer enrolled.



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A. Age

1. For Early Head Start, an enrollee must be under the age of three or a pregnant woman. Agencies have the option of enrolling children directly into their RHS program if they turn 3 before September 2nd. If children turn 3 after September 2nd, they can be enrolled in the Home Base program.
2. For Head Start, a child must be at least three years old, or turn three by the date used to determine eligibility for public school and be no older than the age required to attend kindergarten.
3. Program staff must verify the child's age.
4. For pregnant women, staff must verify pregnancy.

B. Eligibility Criteria - A pregnant women or child is eligible if;

1. The family's income is equal to or below the poverty line; or
2. The family is eligible for or, in the absence of child care, would be potentially eligible for public assistance; including TANF child-only payments; or
3. The child is homeless as defined by the McKinney Vento Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)sect.725(2)); or
4. The child is in foster care.

Program staff must verify eligibility based on income with the use of tax forms, pay stubs or other proof of income to determine the family income for the relevant 12 month time period. All requirements will be reviewed and verified at least annually.

A program must establish written policies and procedures that describe all action taken against staff who intentionally violate federal and program eligibility determination regulations and who enroll pregnant women and children that are not eligible to receive Early Head Start or Head Start services.

RECRUITMENT

In all recruitment efforts, adequate program descriptions will be made available, including general program content, general location of centers or family child care homes, service areas, dates, times and places of registration, ages of children accepted, and contacts for additional information. Programs must include specific efforts to actively locate and recruit children with disabilities and other vulnerable children, including homeless children and children in foster care. If the program does not provide transportation services, information about public transit available to families must be in recruitment announcements. The announcements distributed during the preliminary recruitment phase will contain sufficient information to enable families to apply at any time during the program year. Each agency will complete a recruitment plan annually.

A. Recruitment Activities: Preliminary recruitment will begin a minimum of one month prior to the scheduled program opening. The program will be advertised in the following manner with the highest priority going to efforts that contact families directly.

1. Door-to-door and/or direct contact with potential families will be made in the service areas by staff with the assistance of parents, if they are available.
2. An agency may elect to use local radio and television stations and newspapers to announce the opening of registration and ongoing recruitment.
3. As feasible, notices in the native languages of the eligible families will be posted at laundromats, grocery stores, service stations, churches, health clinics, workplaces, county farm bureau offices, and other locations where the public generally gather.
4. Schools and community agencies, including agencies serving children with disabilities will be notified and asked for referrals.
5. Actively recruit families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care by contacting shelters and foster agencies.
6. The plan for recruiting pregnant women should address those experiencing homelessness, pregnant teens, teens in foster care, and women with special needs/risk factors. In addition, programs should attempt, as appropriate, to involve the child's father in the program.
7. Utilize the COPA Recruitment, Eligibility Waiting List and Ineligible/Terminated list for potential applicants.
8. Ongoing recruitment will continue during the season. Program staff will also continue to provide ongoing outreach activities to the community in order to identify underserved populations, potential community partners and general community awareness of the programs.

B. Applications

1. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis.
2. A Child/Family Services Application will be completed with parent/legal guardian.
3. All data regarding income, date of birth, immunization status and any special circumstances will be verified by Head Start staff completing the application and designated management staff.
4. Disabilities must be verified by a current IEP/IFSP document.
5. During the application process, parents will be informed of their eligibility status and their child's name will be placed on the electronic waiting list. Parents will be provided information about other child care programs in the area if they do not meet the Head Start eligibility requirements. All completed applications will be inputted into the electronic data base. Programs that provide services through Head Start and state will verify income, family size, and need as required by the applicable funding sources.
6. For pregnant women applications, the unborn child is included in the family size.

SELECTION

Modesto City School's Delegate Parent Policy Committee and Governing Body will approve the criteria for defining enrollment priorities. The electronic data base system will prioritize all applications for Head Start & Early Head Start programs by assigning a point value to each priority below:

A. Criteria

- Income Eligible
- Transition between RHS/EHS programs (*without a break in service in any SCOE Delegate/Grantee Operated EHS/RHS program within the same program year*)
- Re-enrollee (*prior enrollment in any SCOE EHS/RHS or CCMHS program*)
- 4 year old (*receive priority in RHS program*)
- Current IEP/IFSP (this could apply for a pregnant woman with an IEP)
- Homeless
- Child Protective Services /Court Referral
- At Risk of Abuse/Neglect / Exploitation /or Domestic Violence (*written referral dated within 6 months from legal, medical, social service agency or shelter with required elements*)
- Foster Child/Independent Living (Foster System)
- Teen Parent (*compulsory school age*)
- Non-parental guardianship
- High Risk Pregnancy Diagnosed by doctor or Mental Health professional (for enrollment of pregnant woman only)
- Transition between agency's state funded Child Development Program and RHS/EHS program (*without a break in service in any EHS/RHS program of SCOE or its delegate agencies within the same program year*)
- Prior IEP/IFSP
- Sibling of a child currently enrolled in a SCOE RHS/EHS program.
- Over Income
- ***Resides in the district***

B. Waiting List

1. COPA Eligible Accepted List will be utilized to maintain waiting lists used to select children for enrollment. Center management and/or social service staff will review and print the Eligible Accepted List as openings occur and at least monthly to ensure an accurate and current waitlist.
2. Programs implementing more than one option (i.e. center based and home based) will maintain waiting lists for each option.
3. After meeting full enrollment, including 10% enrollment of children with a disability, each agency must sustain a viable waitlist. When an agency does not have a viable wait list to fill current or upcoming vacancies, a Recruitment Work Plan will be completed and submitted to Grantee documenting ongoing recruitment efforts.

C. Selecting Children for Enrollment

After prioritization on the electronic database has taken place and Eligible Accepted List have been established, all available openings will be filled.

1. For a full working-day, State/Head Start classroom, eligible children already enrolled in a State only slot at the center or family child care home shall be enrolled in the Head Start/State slot.
2. The child with the lowest income will be enrolled first within each priority group as indicated on the electronic data base.
3. Early Head Start vacancies will be filled based on enrollment priorities and age group/pregnant women vacancies available. For the purpose of determining the number of individuals enrolled in an EHS program, the pregnant woman is counted as the one who is enrolled. Once the child is born (at 6 weeks of age), it is the child who is enrolled.
4. In the event that more than one pregnant woman has the same prioritization points and income, the vacancy will go to the woman whose estimated due date and recovery period coincide the most with an opening in a center based program.
5. In order to receive full working-day services, children must have parent(s)/guardian(s) who are working, going to school, incapacitated, seeking permanent housing or seeking employment, or a child who has an open CPS case or has been identified as being at-risk.
6. At least 10 percent (10%) of the total funded enrollment by each Delegate Agency/Grantee Op will be children with documented disabilities. Agencies may select an over income child with an IEP/IFSP prior to a child with higher priority points if the agency is not serving more than 10% over income of their total funded enrollment. When placing children with documented disabilities, the composition of the classroom and individual child needs will be considered to ensure appropriate placement and least restrictive environment. The child's eligibility points and income level will also be considered in order to ensure that children with the highest needs are given priority.
7. Programs that are blended/collaborated with State funds must select a child who is CPS/At Risk prior to selecting any other child. (CPS/At Risk child is defined as a child that has been identified at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation or who are receiving child protective services in accordance with the California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 18092).
8. Not more than ten percent (10%) of the total number of the agency's funded enrollment may be over one-hundred percent (100%) of the federal poverty income guidelines.
9. If approved by the grantee, in order to maintain or reach funded enrollment, not more than thirty-five percent (35%) of the total number of children cumulatively enrolled may be between one-hundred and one-hundred thirty (100-130%) percent of the federal poverty income guidelines ("Near Low Income"). If this "Near Low Income" enrollment option is approved, the ten percent (10%) over-income limitation from the immediately preceding requirement applies only to enrollees that are over one-hundred thirty percent (130%) of the federal poverty income guidelines.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment of eligible children shall not be denied on the basis of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, disability, or chronic health condition or its severity.

1. All families of the children selected will be notified by phone. Families will be contacted by mail or home visit, if they are unable to be reached by telephone. If the family cannot be contacted within three days, the family of the next child on the eligible accepted list will be contacted. All contact attempts will be documented in Family Case notes and on eligible accepted list documentation. Children's names remain on the waiting list unless family requests removal.
2. Families will be notified by phone or letter of the date, time and location of the parent orientation.
3. A program must fill all vacancies within 30 days. Sites that are funded by Head Start/State must fill slots immediately. All sites must fill vacancies as soon as possible.
4. If a child in the Regional Head Start program has been found income eligible and is participating, he or she will remain income eligible throughout that enrollment year and the immediately succeeding enrollment year. If a child will be attending Head Start for a third year, the family income must be re-verified.
5. If a child in the Early Head Start program or Early Head Start Child Care Partnership has been found income eligible and is participating, he or she will remain income eligible throughout their enrollment in Early Head Start. When a child moves from Early Head Start to Head Start, the family income must be re-verified. Note: Early Head Start center based programs serve children up to age 36 months or per center license. Early Head Start home based programs may serve children until a preschool vacancy is available to them or the program year ends. Early Head Start Child Care Partnership family child care home programs serve children up to age 48 months.
6. Prior to the beginning of the program year, the Disabilities Supervisor/ designee will collaborate with the agency's management staff in order to appropriately plan for children with special needs as needed.
7. Prior to the beginning of the program year and as needed, health staff will collaborate with staff and families to appropriately plan for children with incidental medical needs.
8. If a program determines from their Community Assessment there are families experiencing homelessness or children in foster care that would benefit from services, they may reserve up to 3% of their funded slots for 30 days for this population. If these slots are not filled in the 30 days, they are considered vacant slots and must be filled in 30 days.
9. Programs may allow children enrolled with the criteria of homeless or foster to attend without immunizations or other records for up to 30 days. Program staff must work with families to obtain the required documents. Efforts must be made to maintain a child's enrollment regardless of whether the family or child moves to a different service area or transition the child to a program in a different service area.
Applications must be updated and approved each program year.
10. Applications must be updated and approved each program year.

11. Families enrolled in to collaborated enrollment vacancies will be assessed a family fee, as applicable, based on the California Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division regulations. Collaborations between Regional and Early Head Start and California's State Preschool, General Child Care, and Alternative Payment allow for the following program and service enhancements: additional staff, lower ratios, more service days and hours, and comprehensive supports to children and families.
12. Families that are enrolled in collaborated programs that are 'at risk' or with child protective services may be exempt from paying a family fee if the referral specifies an exemption is necessary.
13. Families enrolled in collaborated programs that are receiving CAL Works (TANF) are exempt from paying family fees.
14. Families that are enrolled in collaborated programs that are experiencing a temporary hardship due to unexpected events or unforeseen changes that has resulted in temporary inability to pay their state program family fee may request Head Start to pay their family fee as a payer of last resort.
15. Parent participation in any program activity is voluntary, including consent for data sharing, and is not required as a condition of the child's enrollment.

ATTENDANCE

A. Improving Child Attendance

1. Information will be shared with families at the beginning of the program year and throughout the year regarding the benefits of regular attendance.
2. Any time a child is unexpectedly absent without notification from the parent/guardian, a designated staff member must attempt to contact the family by phone within one hour of the child's expected start time to ensure the child's well-being.
3. Within the first 60 days of the program operation, and an ongoing basis thereafter, child attendance must be tracked to identify children with patterns of absences that put them at risk of missing 10% of program days per year. Staff will work with families through home visits or direct contact to identify barriers and develop strategies to improve attendance. When developing strategies to improve attendance, review data to identify if attendance concerns are due to excused or absences.
4. When a child ceases to attend and efforts have been made with the family to resume attendance, and the child's attendance does not resume, the slot is considered vacant.
5. Programs must support the attendance of families experiencing homelessness by utilizing community resources for transportation to and from the program and to meet other needs of the family.
6. Program must support attendance of a child not able to attend due to a temporary medical issue (ex: broken leg, injury) by offering the family modified or home-based services.

B. Improving Agency Attendance

1. If an agency falls below 85% average daily attendance for any month, they must complete and submit an Enrollment/Attendance Work Plan ERSEA 16.
2. Agency will utilize data to identify the challenges/barriers that impacted attendance for the month. This data will be used to develop strategies to support families to improve child attendance.

DPPC Approval Date: January 17, 2020

Board Approval Date: