

**RECRUITMENT and ELIGIBILITY POLICY**  
**DIVISION: HEAD START PRENATAL – 5 PROGRAM**

Policy Number: ER9703-07	Effective Date: 02/19/97 Revision Date: 8/10/22	Policy Council Approval Date: 02/19/97
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**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:** (45CFR #1302.13) Head Start follows specific recruitment procedures throughout the year to inform all families within the Head Start service area of the availability of services and encourages them to apply. These procedures are designed to ensure that the neediest children and prenatal women from low-income families are recruited for the program.

**Recruitment Procedures:**

1. The Enrollment Coordinator works closely with and monitors the Family Resource Specialists and Home Visitors recruitment efforts.
2. The Enrollment Coordinator will place advertisements in local newspapers and will send public service announcements to local radio stations informing the community about Head Start and Early Head Start services.
3. The Family Resource Specialists and the Home Visitors will contact local social service agencies such as the Family Services Division, (FSD), Parents as Teachers, (PAT), Women, Infants and Children, (WIC), and local Health Departments for a list of eligible Head Start and Early Head Start children.
4. The Family Resource Specialists and Home Visitors will contact local schools for a number of recruitment fliers and brochures they will need to send home to families with Head Start and Early Head Start eligible children.
5. The Family Resource Specialists and Home Visitors will request that their Head Start and Early Head Start parents inform their relatives, friends and neighbors of the program's availability of services and encourage them to apply.
6. The Head Start Family Resource Specialists will set up information booths at each school where kindergarten enrollments and early childhood screenings are held.
7. The Family Resource Specialists and Home Visitors will blanket the local community with recruitment fliers, brochures and posters, (Laundromats, grocery stores, convenience stores, apartment complexes, etc.).
8. The Head Start Mental Health and Special Services Manager will meet with Local Education Agency (LEA) representatives to identify children with disabilities and receive referrals to the Head Start program. He/She will also meet with First Steps Intake Workers and Case Managers to identify children ages newborn to three years with disabilities and receive referrals to the Early Head Start program.
9. The Family Resource Specialists and Home Visitors will recruit and obtain a greater number of applications than enrollment opportunities that are anticipated to be available over the course of the enrollment year in order to select those children and prenatal women with the greatest need for the program's services.
10. The Family Resource Specialists and Home Visitors will maintain at all times throughout the operating year a waiting list with a minimum of 15% over their funded enrollment of income eligible applicants at each center and Homebased caseload.
11. Every month, the Family Resource Specialists and Home Visitors will monitor their waitlist and will follow a three-phase approach to ensure waitlists remain at the required 15%.

## **Waitlists**

### ***Phase I – Waitlist is at or above 15% of funded enrollment***

1. The Family Resource Specialists, the Home Visitors and Family Advocates will make at least four efforts per month to recruit within their community.

### ***Phase II – Waitlist is between 5-14% of funded enrollment***

1. The Family Resource Specialists and the Home Visitors will meet with their supervisor to create a recruitment plan that has at least eight efforts per month to recruit within their community.

2. These efforts and activities will be documented on the “Head Start/Early Head Start Monthly Recruitment Plan”.

3. The Area Supervisor will sign off on the plan, and staff will upload the plan to the Documentation of Recruitment Efforts module in Child Plus by the fifth of the following month.

4. This will continue until the waitlist is at the required 15% or the waitlist falls below 5%, which would place the employee in Phase III

### ***Phase III – Waitlist is below 5% of funded enrollment***

1. The Area Supervisor will determine if the cause of the low waitlist is an individual issue or a widespread issue.

2. Individual issues will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by the Area Supervisor. An individual action plan will be created and implemented to assist the employee in building a waitlist.

3. Widespread issues will require the Area Supervisor to meet with the HS Director, and/or the HS/EHS Enrollment Coordinator to determine a course of action.

4. If a Family Resource Specialist is in Phase III and they have an opening, they have 2 weeks to turn in an income eligible application for selection. If they fail to turn in an income eligible application, they will be placed on an action plan. If it happens a 2<sup>nd</sup> time, they will be given a written reprimand.

5. If a Home Visitor is in Phase III and they have an opening, they have 2 weeks to turn in an income eligible application for selection. If they fail to turn in an income eligible application they will be placed on an action plan and a child will be selected from another Home Visitor’s waitlist to fill the open spot. If it happens a 2<sup>nd</sup> time, the Home Visitor will be given a written reprimand.

## **Eligibility Verification**

1. Birth certificate, Hospital certificate, MO Health Net card, or Shot records may be used to verify a child’s age. Obtaining documentation of a child’s date of birth should not cause a hardship for the family to provide. If documents are unavailable due to special circumstances, an application will still be completed.

2. Program staff must use tax forms, pay stubs, or other proof of income to determine a family’s income for the relevant time period.

3. If a family cannot provide proof of income for the relevant time period, program staff may use a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Verification form and/or written statements from employers.

4. If the family reports no income for the relevant time period, a program may accept the family’s signed declaration to that effect, **IF** program staff describe efforts made to verify the family’s income, **AND**

explains how the family's total income was calculated **OR** seeks information from third parties about the family's eligibility, if the family gives written consent.

5. Families who meet the definition of Homeless according to the McKinney-Vento Act will be considered categorically eligible. Parents will complete the Self-Declaration and 3rd party release. Staff will verify that the family meets the guidelines and will write a contact note to justify their determination.

6. Children who are in Foster Care will be considered categorically eligible. Staff will obtain documentation from the Children's Division stating that the child is in a foster placement.

7. Families who receive SNAP, SSI, or TANF are considered categorically eligible. Staff will use documentation that shows names and eligibility date (must be current within the last 30 days). Staff may visually verify this information, when needed.

#### **Incomplete Applications:**

1. Families are assisted in completing their applications to ensure that all information necessary for selection is completed.

2. Until the application is complete, an application must not be signed by the Head Start or the Early Head Start staff person who is completing the application.

3. If a family has not supplied the Head Start or Early Head Start staff person with all the required documents necessary to complete an application, the Missing Document Form will be completed. A copy will be given to the family as a reminder of what is needed to complete the application. A copy will be in the applicant's file.

4. The Start or Early Head Start staff person should not hold an application longer than 30 days. The staff member must make a minimum of one attempt every week to complete the application. Documentation of attempts to complete the application will be retained in the applicant's folder on a Contact Note.

5. If an application is still incomplete at the end of 30 days, it will be sent to the Central Office to the attention of the Head t and Early Head Start Enrollment Coordinator. At that time, one final attempt will be made by a Program Assistant to make contact with the family to finish the application. If they are unsuccessful, the file will be marked incomplete and attached in Child+.

#### **Reverification of Income and Eligibility**

##### **Waitlist:**

1. Families must update income annually in order to remain on the waitlist. When reverification is due, the FRS/HV will contact the family to update the application and income, including the selection criteria.

##### **Enrolled:**

1. Head Start families who are enrolled and entering their 3<sup>rd</sup> participation year, will update their income with the FRS prior to the new school year.

2. EHS families will complete a new application prior to transition. The application may be started when the child is 2 ½ years old. The child will not be waitlisted until they are 35 months.

3. The program will reverify income if the Selection Criteria indicate it is necessary to assign points correctly or if the Office of Head Start makes a change to income eligibility.

### **Conflict of interest**

1. Any employee who knowingly falsifies eligibility documents will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
2. Any employee who knowingly enrolls an ineligible participant will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
3. Employees at ESCSWA seeking to apply for HS/EHS services must complete their application at the agency's main office and with the HS/EHS Enrollment Coordinator.
4. Employees should avoid situations that create a real or perceived conflict of interest. To that end, employees are prohibited from taking HS/EHS program applications from family members, friends, or other individuals where the employee may have a vested interest in the applicant receiving services.
5. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.