

Bourbon County Preschool 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:

Staff will recruit children ages 3-4 years. Applications will be accepted for children ages 3-4 years on or before August 1st. The main recruitment drive will be held from April 1 to August 1. Applications will be accepted from all families within the recruitment area (Bourbon County) 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 will be completed within 30 days of receiving an age-eligible application and they will be added to the waiting list.

Priority will be to enroll children from low-income families or categorically eligible (TANF, SNAP, SSI, Foster, Homeless). The 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.

The Program Director is responsible for ensuring that age and income/categorical eligibility are verified and ensure an eligibility determination record is maintained. Age and income must be verified before a child is determined eligible and before a child is selected or enrolled in Head Start. The Director must review and sign off on eligibility information before the selection and enrollment of each applicant.

Procedure:

1. Staff must:
 - a. Conduct an in-person interview with each family.
 - i. 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 family's 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 the procedure, program staff must document in the eligibility determination record the reasons why the in-person interview was not possible.
 - b. Verify age, income/categorical eligibility
 - i. 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 a "Parent Report"

- ii. A child must be at least 3 years old and be no older than the age required to attend school. (1302.12 Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility)
- iii. 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.
- iv. Income Eligibility requirements:
 1. A child is eligible if:
 - a. The family's income is equal to or below the poverty line, or
 - b. The family is eligible for public assistance; including TANF child-only payments and SNAP, the child is homeless or child is in foster care.
 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 10% of the program's enrollment.
- v. Verifying Income:
 1. If the family can provide all w-2 forms, pay stubs, or pay envelopes for the relevant time period, staff must:
 - a. Use all family income for the relevant time period to determine eligibility according to income guidelines.
 - b. Calculate total gross income using applicable sources of income.
 - c. Make an adjustment to a family's gross income calculation for the purposes of determining eligibility to account for excessive housing costs. Available bills, bank statements, and other relevant documentation are provided to calculate total annual housing costs with appropriate multipliers to determine if a family spends more than 30 percent of their total gross income on house costs. (Housing costs mean the total of annual applicable expenses on housing which may include rent or mortgage payments, homeowner's or renter's insurance, utilities, interest, and taxes on the home. Utilities include electricity, gas, water, sewer, and trash.)
 - d. If applicable, reduce the total gross income by the amount spent on housing costs that exceed more than 30 percent.
 - e. 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 statements from employers for the relevant time period and use the 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:
 - a. Accept the family's signed declaration to that effect, staff must;
 - i. Describe efforts made to verify the family's income; and
 - ii. Explain how the family's total income was calculated; or
 - iii. Seek 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.
- vi. Categorical eligibility requirements:
1. A family is categorically eligible for Head Start if:
 - a. The child is homeless, as defined in 1305.2; or
 - b. The child is in foster care, as defined in 1305.2.
 - c. The family is eligible for public assistance: TANF, SNAP, or SSI
 2. 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, birth certificates or other documents. The program must give the family reasonable time to present these documents.
- vii. Verifying categorical eligibility:
1. A family can prove categorical eligibility with:
 - a. 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;
 - b. 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 application forms, or notes from an interview with staff to establish the child is homeless.
 - c. Any other documentation that established categorical eligibility.
 2. If a family can provide one of the documents described above, staff must:
 - a. Describe efforts made to verify the accuracy of the information provided; and,
 - b. State whether the family is categorically eligible.

3. If a family cannot provide one of the documents described, 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:
 - a. Describes the efforts made to verify that a child is homeless, and
 - b. Describes the child's living situation, including the specific conditions under which the child was determined to be homeless.
4. 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 includes:
 - a. The family's written consent to contact each third party
 - b. The third parties' names, titles, and affiliations
 - c. Information from third parties regarding the family's eligibility that includes a statement that identifies whether
 - i. The family's income is below income guidelines for its size and lists the family's size
 - ii. The family is eligible for or, in the absence of child care, potentially eligible for public assistance
 - iii. The child is a homeless child, as defined in the McKinney-Vento Act
 - iv. The child is in foster care
 - v. The family meets an income level of 101-130 of the Federal Poverty Line
 - vi. The family meets the over-income requirements.
- c. Create an eligibility determination record for each enrolled participant
 - i. Eligibility determination records for participants and ongoing training records for staff will be maintained in hard copy format or electronically. Each eligibility determination record will be maintained in the child's file and must include:
 1. Copies of any documents or statements, including declarations, for income, categorical status, and age that are deemed necessary to verify eligibility.
 2. A statement that program staff has made reasonable efforts to verify information by:
 - a. Conducting either an in-person or a telephone interview with the family
 - b. Describing efforts made to verify eligibility
 - c. Collecting documents required for third parties, includes
 - i. A statement that identified whether:
 1. The family's income is below income guidelines for its size and lists the family's size

2. The family is eligible for or, in the absence of child care, potentially eligible for public assistance;
 3. The child is homeless child as defined in 1305.2 including the specific condition described in 1305.2 under which the child was determined to be homeless;
 4. The child is in foster care
 5. The family meets the over-income requirements
 6. The family meets the alternative criteria of the verifying income section.
3. The program must keep eligibility determination records
 - a. For those currently enrolled, as long as they are enrolled
 - b. For one year after they have either stopped receiving services, or
 - c. Are no longer enrolled

Eligibility Duration (1302.12 Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility)

- If a child is determined eligible for Head Start services and is participating in the Head Start Program, he or she will remain eligible through the end of the succeeding program year.
- Under exceptional circumstances, a child's enrollment can be extended to a third year, provided that family income is verified again (1302.15 Enrollment)

Additional Allowances (1302.12 Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility)

- An additional 35 percent of participants whose families whose families are below 130 percent of the poverty line may be enrolled if the program:
 - Ensures it is meeting the needs of all eligible children
 - Serves all eligible children first.
- If families whose incomes are between 100 and 130 percent of the poverty level are enrolled the program will report to the regional office:
 - How it is meeting the needs of low-income families
 - Outreach and enrollment policies and procedures
 - Efforts to be fully enrolled with eligible participants
 - Policies, procedures, and selection criteria used to serve eligible children
 - Current enrollment and enrollment for the previous year
 - Number of children served, disaggregated by the eligibility criteria
 - The Eligibility criteria of each child on the waiting list

Selection

A selection criteria that weigh the prioritization of selection of participants, based on community needs identified in the community needs assessment, and including family income, whether the child is homeless, whether the child is in foster care, the child's age, whether the child is eligible for special education and related services or early intervention services, as appropriate, as determined under the IDEA and other relevant family or child risk factors. **Enrollment of children of staff members is part of the selection criteria.** A student will not be denied based on disability or chronic health condition or its severity.

A waiting list will be maintained and children will be prioritized using the Eligibility Criteria Form, enrolling children with the most points first.

- Eligibility Criteria form will be completed for each family.
- Children with the highest needs will receive priority on the waiting list
- Families with children who meet the age eligibility and are categorically eligible and children with incomes at 100% or below the Federal Poverty Level will be selected before families with children who meet age eligibility and with incomes between 101 to 130% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Accepted:

Prior to the first scheduled program class day, an acceptance letter will be sent to each family.

Enrollment:

Children from low income families and categorically eligible children will receive first priority for enrollment opportunities in the Head Start Program.

1. A child is enrolled when the child has been accepted and the parent/guardian has attended orientation, or when the child has attended the first day of class.
2. At least 10% of **actual** enrollment opportunities will be made available to children eligible for services under the IDEA with disabilities
3. Director's approval is required prior to enrolling children after April 1 or within 60 days of the last school day.
4. Children who are eligible for kindergarten cannot be enrolled in a Head Start slot.

Children who did not qualify for Head Start services, are 4 years old by August 1, and have a family income of less than 160% of poverty will be enrolled in the State At Risk Preschool Program.

Children who did not qualify for either the Head Start Preschool program or the State At Risk Preschool Program and are 4 years old by August 1 will be enrolled in the locally funded preschool program.

Recruitment:

1. Staff will recruit children aged 3-4 years, with applications accepted online or in hard copy until August 1. The main recruitment period runs from April 1 to August 1. Applications will be accepted from all families in Bourbon County, and each family will have an in-person interview.
2. New applications will be accepted throughout the year. From the first scheduled program class day through March 31st, an in-person interview will be completed within 30 days of receiving an age-eligible application and they will be added to the waiting list.
3. Each year, request the Head Start list from the Head Start Collaboration Office to identify potential students who meet income qualifications.
4. Child Find will be promoted through local newspaper ads, as well as through coordination with the Kentucky Early Intervention System to help locate and recruit children with disabilities.
5. Efforts will also focus on identifying and recruiting children in need, including those experiencing homelessness or in foster care, by collaborating with Family Support through the local Department of Community-Based Services.

Recruitment Action Plan:

Action	Timeline	Responsible Staff
Solicit age-eligible waitlisted families for current income	January –June	Family Service
Create and distribute recruitment materials	January – April	Family Service
Participate/organize recruitment at community events	July –June	Family Service
Use social media to fill slots or waiting list	July – June	Director
Contact Summer Food Staff to distribute Head Start flyers	June-July	Director
Provide Application Assistance	Ongoing	All Staff
Recruitment materials will be available in Spanish	Ongoing	Family Service

Training

1. New staff who determine eligibility on applicable federal regulations and program policies and procedures will be trained within 90 days of hire. Seasoned staff who determine eligibility on applicable federal regulations and program policies and procedures will attend an annual update training in March.
2. Training will include:
 - a. Methods on how to collect complete and accurate eligibility information from families and their party sources. As well as information on:
 - i. Eligibility criteria

- ii. Document verification process
 - iii. Completion of verification forms
 - iv. Allowable documentation
 - v. Retention of documentation records
 - b. Incorporate strategies for treating families with dignity and respect and for dealing with possible issues of domestic violence, stigma, and privacy
 - c. Explain program policies and procedures that describe actions taken against staff, families, or participants who attempt to provide or intentionally provide false information.
 - i. Any staff violating the income or age verification (falsifying information and/or intentionally enrolling ineligible children and families) will be reprimanded. This will result in a written violation and can be grounds for dismissal from a position with Head Start.
3. Governing Board and Policy Council training will be conducted within 180 days of the beginning of the term of a new governing body or policy council each year.

Policy Council Approval: 10/10/16

Board Approval: 10/20/16