

3a. Selection, Eligibility, and Enrollment Criteria of Families Policy/Procedure

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Policy

The Selection process will follow the federal and state guidelines with the goal of serving income eligible and those children who have specific factors of need for Head Start/EHS/ECEAP services following the Selection Criteria approved by Policy Council.

Procedure

1. In order to obtain all necessary data essential in determining eligible children, applicants for the Head Start/EHS/ECEAP program, families are required to complete a Pre-application (ERSEA 3a1) that states they have authority to enroll the child along with providing income documentation and current/up-to-date immunizations. Staff will assist parents as needed. Applications are accepted year-round.
2. To be eligible for Head Start/EHS/ECEAP enrollment, the following requirements must be met:
 - a. **EHS** eligibility is prenatal to third birthday.
 - b. **Head Start** children must be 3 years of age upon enrollment.
 - c. **ECEAP** age eligibility is age 3 years old by August 31. A child is allowed to be enrolled into an ECEAP classroom once they turn 3 with income eligibility and prior EHS/ESIT, i.e. The Progress Center. These children must not exceed 25% of ECEAP enrollment.
 - Children with an IEP are categorically eligible for ECEAP regardless of income. Enrollment of these children is still based on priority points.
 - d. Children must live in the Cowlitz County service area. (See 2.i)
 - e. Families must meet the Head Start/EHS Income Guidelines based on Federal Poverty Level (FPL). ECEAP Income Guidelines are based on State Median Income (SMI).
 - f. Verification of income eligibility may include examination of any of the following documents:

- Income Tax form for the previous year;
 - W-2 forms for the previous year;
 - Public Assistance – TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), SSI (Supplemental Security Income) or active status of receiving SNAP Food Assistance;
 - TANF benefits or services include: cash payments, job training, vouchers, transportation and subsidized child care such as Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)
 - Families that receive these benefits are categorically eligible for Head Start.
 - Families that only provide SNAP verification as their income documentation are only eligible for the Head Start program. ECEAP does not accept SNAP as a proof of income.
 - Unemployment history from the Employment Security Office; • Social Security statement for 12 months;
 - A child in foster care is categorically eligible;
 - A child in Kinship Care is categorically eligible;
 - A child experiencing homelessness is categorically eligible. Verification of Homeless Status Form (ERSEA 3b1) needs to be completed and attached to documentation;
- g. Income eligibility is documented on the Eligibility Verification Form (ERSEA 3b) by the Program Coordinator, Program Support Supervisor or designee. The Eligibility Verification Form notes which documents were examined to verify income eligibility and both are placed in the child's site file along with the Selection Criteria Score Sheet. (See Selection Criteria Score Sheet, ERSEA 3d for children in the 3-5 year program and ERSEA 3d1 for EHS.) Both forms are also uploaded into ChildPlus as part of the application and the income is verified electronically on the ELMS system for ECEAP students. A copy of the ELMS priority point sheet will be copied and placed in the student's site file.
- Staff who intentionally violate Federal and Program eligibility determination regulations are also violating the Lower Columbia College Code of Ethics, which may be cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
 - Parents sign a statement on the Pre-Application (ERSEA 1a1), Eligibility Application (ERSEA 1a) and, if needed, the No Income Statement (ERSEA 1c) stating, "I certify that the information contained in this affidavit is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that if I knowingly give false information or misrepresentation

of my income, it may result in disqualification from the program.”

- h. A 3-year-old child who is income eligible and is participating in the Head Start program remains income eligible throughout that enrollment year and the following year.
 - ECEAP enrollment for the next program year, priority placement is given to children with the most need/highest priority points. In certain rare occasions, a child may not be able to participate in a second year due to others having greater priority.
 - An EHS child remains income eligible until transitioning from EHS at age 3 years as outlined in the Transition from EHS to Head Start/ECEAP or Appropriate Placement. A child transitioning from EHS to the 3-5-year program must apply using the Eligibility Application (ERSEA 1a) and provide current income verification.
 - i. A child who is applying for enrollment that resides outside of Cowlitz County must have permission in writing from the director of their local Head Start/ECEAP program and will only be considered after exhausting all income eligible children on the waitlist.
 - j. When the waitlist is exhausted of all income eligible and categorically eligible families, Head Start/EHS families who have income within 100-130% Federal Poverty Level and ECEAP within 36-50% State Median Income are contacted for enrollment following the selection criteria.
 - k. Eligibility for School Day classes: Priority is given to families who are working, going to school/technical training or be in Kinship/Foster Care.
3. Once a child's family income has been verified, the pre-application will be processed through the Selection Criteria established by the program to give priority to those who are in most need of Head Start/EHS/ECEAP services. The Selection Criteria gives points for the following areas: (See Selection Criteria Form, ERSEA 2d and/or ERSEA 3d1 for the number of points given.)
 - a. Parental Status
 - b. Disability
 - c. Income
 - d. Age
 - e. Prior Status
 - f. Need
 4. Requests for transfer within the Head Start/EHS/ECEAP program (because of a change in the family's living, working or child care arrangement, etc.) will be given top priority by following the Request for Change of Classroom (MSYS 7p) procedure set up in connection with the Content Area Service Team. This is also documented within the ChildPlus Data System.
 5. Vacancies will be filled as soon as possible not to exceed 30 days.

- a. The intake team member will contact the first family on the waitlist to determine if the family would like to accept the vacancy.
 - b. In rare cases, the intake team member (in consultation with the Content Area Service Team) may move to the next child on the waitlist due to age and/or emergent need. Documentation regarding reasons for this exception will be noted.
6. Families who do not meet the income requirements will be placed on the waiting list after any income-eligible children and will only be considered if there are no other income-eligible children on the waiting list. Families must meet the eligibility procedure according to the Head Start and ECEAP designations.
7. The Intake Team will contact selected families to complete the enrollment intake. Communication will be sent to those who remain on the waitlist in September/October or as applications are processed throughout the year.