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Ref #: 1302.15, HSA 645	Policy Council Approval Date: 07/25/2023

COMPONENT: ERSEA

SUBJECT: ENROLLMENT OF CHILDREN

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE: The program maintains its funded enrollment level and fills any vacancy as soon as possible (within 30 days).

POLICY AND PROCEDURE:

The program makes efforts to maintain enrollment of eligible children for the following year.

Under exceptional circumstances, the program may maintain a child’s enrollment in Head Start for a third year, provided that family income is verified again.

When the program serves homeless children or children in foster care, it makes efforts to maintain the child’s enrollment regardless of whether the family or child moves to a different service area, or transitions the child to a program in a different service area, as required in §1302.72 (a), according to the family’s needs.

If the program determines from the community assessment there are families experiencing homelessness in the area, or children in foster care that could benefit from services, the program may reserve one or more enrollment slots for pregnant women and children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care, when a vacancy occurs.

- No more than 3% of the program’s funded enrollment slots may be reserved.
- If the reserved enrollment slot is not filled within 30 days, the enrollment slot becomes vacant and then must be filled within 30 days of vacancy (1302.15 a).

Children from diverse economic backgrounds who are funded with other sources, including private pay, are not considered part of the program’s eligible funded enrollment.

The program complies with state immunization enrollment and attendance requirements, with the exception of homeless children as described in §1302.16 c 1.

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.

Enrollment Process

Program ERSEA staff fill out each form completely and accurately and ensure that forms filled out by parents are complete and accurate.

- a) Family Advocates and parent/guardians sign all necessary forms.
- b) Family Advocates enter the information from completed enrollment packet into the electronic record-keeping system.

Enrollment is in accordance with Head Start regulations.

The program's enrollment procedures take into account:

- The number of children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and their severity,
- The services and resources provided by other agencies, and
- Observation of applicable State laws which require that children entering center-based preschool programs have complete immunizations prior to entering to reduce the spread of communicable disease. **Children experiencing homelessness** are allowed 60 days upon entry to have complete immunizations.

An acceptance notification is sent out to the accepted families once the Family Services Manager notifies the Family Advocate(s).

Family Advocates schedule an enrollment appointment with the parent/s in a timely manner.

- The application packet is completed at the appointment.
- Family Advocates conduct an in-person interview with each family to the extent possible.
- Family Advocates assist each family in completing enrollment packets.
- Family Advocates explain each form to parents/guardians and ensure that all items are appropriately completed.
- A child cannot attend their first day in the program until all enrollment paperwork has been completed.

Enrollment Priority

Each program uses a uniform priority ranking, assigns points to each child/family, and the Family Services Manager maintains the Waiting List in the electronic record-keeping system according to these points (see “Selection Criteria for Priority Enrollment” in [ERSEA-4 Selection of Children](#))

Priority Order is determined by greatest demonstrated needs.

- Greatest needs are determined by the child’s priority score on their *Selection Criteria Form*.
- The Family Services Manager offers the first available slot to the family with greatest need on the Waiting List. The Family Advocate will then contact the family to set up an enrollment appointment. The family may choose to accept that offered placement or wait for their desired option/slot. Income, age and eligibility must be determined first before placement on the Waiting List.

Enrollment of Over-Income Families

The program may enroll over-income families in accordance with the regulations.

Once a site has exhausted its Waiting List for income-eligible children and has made every effort to recruit from the community all income-eligible children, it may enroll the over-income children on the waiting list according to their ranking.

Family Services Manager follows the “Additional Allowances for Programs” section of [ERSEA-2 Determining, Verifying, and Documenting Eligibility](#) to enroll over-income families.

Family Service Manager requests the placement of all over-income children to the Head Start Director for approval.