**MISSISSIPPI COUNTY, ARKANSAS, E.O.C.**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

1302.15; Act 645

**ENROLLMENT OF CHILDREN**

**POLICY:**

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

**PROCEDURE:**

**Enrollment of Children**

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.

1. The program may maintain a child’s enrollment in Early Head Start as described in §1302.12(j)(2).

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.

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

1. ERSEA staff and parent/guardians sign all necessary forms.
2. ERSEA staff enter the information from completed registration packet into the electronic record-keeping system.
3. Enrollment is done in accordance with Head Start regulations.

The program’s enrollment procedures take into account:

1. The number of children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and their severity,
2. The services and resources provided by other agencies, and
3. Observation of applicable State laws which usually require that children entering center-based preschool programs with complete immunizations prior to or within 30 days after entering to reduce the spread of communicable disease.

ERSEA staff schedule an application appointment with the parent/s.

1. The application packet is completed at the appointment.
2. ERSEA staff conduct an in-person interview with each family to the extent possible.
3. ERSEA staff assist each family in completing enrollment packets.
4. ERSEA staff explain each form to parents/guardians and ensure that all items are appropriately completed.

ERSEA staff make determination of acceptance (or Waiting List) within 48 hours of eligibility determination.

ERSEA staff/Program Option staff assign accepted children to classrooms/groups as soon as possible.

1. ERSEA staff send acceptance letters to eligible families.

**Enrollment Priority**

Each program uses a uniform priority ranking, assigns points to each child/family, and ERSEA staff maintain the Waiting List in the electronic record-keeping system according to these points (see “Selection Criteria for Priority Enrollment” in  [(ERSEA) Selection of Children](#Pol20004_ER_SelectionOfChildren))

Priority Order is determined by greatest demonstrated needs.

1. Greatest needs are determined by the child’s priority score on their *Head Start Application/Eligibility Verification Form*.
2. The Data Intake Administrator offers the first available slot to the family with greatest need on the Waiting List.
   * 1. The family may choose to accept that offered placement or wait for their desired option/slot.
     2. 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.

Program staff follow the “Additional Allowances for Programs” section of  [(ERSEA) Determining, Verifying and Documenting Eligibility](#Pol20002_ER_DetermineVerifyDocEligibilit) to enroll over-income families.

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 can enroll the over-income children with special needs on the Waiting List according to their ranking.

For children whose family income exceeds 300% of the poverty line:

1. ERSEA staff send a waiver request to the Head Start/Early Head Start Director when a family’s income exceeds 300% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines.
2. The Head Start/Early Head Start Director may grant this waiver if there is a specific need and the child would benefit from Head Start services.
3. Waiver requests are approved or disapproved on a case-by-case basis.

Once over-income children with special needs have been enrolled, and the site has not yet reached full enrollment, the program may enroll the other over-income children on the Waiting List according to their ranking.

When a program has reached 10% over-income it may choose to enroll additional families between 101-130% of poverty as outlined in section 645 of the Improving School Readiness Act of 2007, not to exceed 35% of participants.

1. Programs choosing to enroll this additional 35% of participants between 101-130% of poverty must submit an annual report detailing the items described in the “Additional Allowances for Programs” section of  [(ERSEA) Determining, Verifying and Documenting Eligibility](#Pol20002_ER_DetermineVerifyDocEligibilit).

4.7 When a family is determined to be over-income, program ERSEA staff contact the Data Intake Administrator to request placement.

1. The Data Intake Administrator reviews program status of over-income families to determine enrollment opportunities.
2. The Data Intake Administrator makes a determination and notifies requesting program within 24 hours.