

# Big Sandy Area Head Start

## ERSEA Procedures

### ERSEA STANDS FOR:

- E** Eligibility
- R** Recruitment
- S** Selection
- E** Enrollment
- A** Attendance

### Purpose

This document serves as the written procedures for ERSEA related activities in the Big Sandy Area Community Action Program – Grantee Head Start. The information contained in this document includes the requirements stated in the OHS release “The Final Rule on Eligibility”. All staff members are required to follow the BSACAP policy “Standards of Conduct” found on the agency website as it relates to the eligibility of children in our program.

### Eligibility

#### **The Enrollment Application**

- The enrollment application must be filled out interview style with the parent. Only the parent or legal guardian of the child can complete the application. It is not acceptable to give the application to the parent and ask them to complete it on their own. Because the application is somewhat complicated and the information can seem foreign to anyone outside of the Head Start program, parents would undoubtedly make several mistakes if filling out the information on their own.
- Though it is not recommended, a parent may be allowed to fill out the enrollment application over the phone if requested. If the parent does choose to fill out the application over the phone, the child will not be considered for enrollment until he/she brings the income documentation and age verification to the program staff, as well as sign the enrollment application.
- In order for an application to be considered “complete” and ready to enter on COPA for waiting list consideration, the Eligibility Verification form must be completed with income and age verification attached.

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*“A child should only be on the COPA Waiting List if an application has been completed as well as an Eligibility Verification Form with copies of the appropriate income and age documentation”*

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That is not to say that a parent cannot fill out an application without those items because they can. But if the parent fills out the application and does not have the income and age verification on hand, you, as the staff member, have two choices of what to do next. You can either 1) move the application aside and not enter it on COPA until the parent produces the income and age documents or 2) you can go ahead and enter the application on COPA and then move the child to the Ineligible List until the parent produces the needed documents. The thing to remember is that a child should only be on the COPA Waiting List if an application has been completed along with an Eligibility Verification Form with copies of the appropriate income and age documentation. Copies of the documentation used to verify age and income must be kept in the enrollment folder for each child.

- While filling out the application with the parent, if you make a mistake, do not use Wite Out to correct it. Simply mark a line through the mistake and initial next to it. Once the parent has signed the application, no corrections can be made.
- Here are some general procedures regarding the completion of the enrollment application:
  - If the parent filling out the application is married and living in the same household as their spouse, regardless of the spouse’s relationship to the child, the spouse should be listed as the Secondary Caregiver for the child. If the parent is living with the child’s other biological parent but they are not married, the other parent should still be listed as the Secondary Caregiver. In all other situations, there would not be a Secondary Caregiver listed.
  - If the parent is employed or attending school, there must be a name listed in the Employer/School Name section.
  - Ethnicity and Race are two entirely different categories according to the Office of Head Start. On the enrollment application, if a parent or child is listed under ethnicity as “Hispanic”, you must still have a designated race.
  - Under Parental Status, either “Single Parent” or “Two Parent” must be selected. If it is listed as single parent, then there should not be a Secondary Caregiver listed. If two parent is listed, then there must be a Secondary Caregiver listed. There may be other selections under Parental Status as well. But regardless of any selections made, single or two parent must be checked.
  - Under Parental Status, the term “Teen Parent” does not refer to whether the parent was a teenager when she gave birth to the child. This selection should only be made if either of the parents are in their teenage years at the time they are filling out the application.
  - There is a section on the enrollment application that says “Living With Grandparent”. Only select that option if the child’s legal guardian is the grandparent. This is not intended to identify whether the child’s family is in the same household as his/her grandparent.

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*If the child applying for enrollment is in Foster or Kinship Care, he should be listed as a family of "1"*

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- If the child applying for enrollment is in Foster or Kinship Care, then "Foster Parent" must be marked under the Parental Status. In addition, all income given to the parent for the Foster or Kinship Care of this child should be listed in the "Child Monthly Income" section of the application and the "Exclude Family Income" box should be checked. The Child Monthly Income section should not be used to record TANF, SSI, or any other income except Foster or Kinship. A child is considered as a Foster Child if there is a statement from the agency who placed the child in Foster Care. The parent does not have to be receiving money from that agency for the child to be viewed as being in Foster Care.
- If the child applying for enrollment is in Foster or Kinship Care, he/she should be listed on the application, Eligibility Verification Form, and any other documentation as a family of "1". A FOSTER OR KINSHIP CHILD IS ALWAYS A FAMILY OF "1", no exceptions. When filling out the application for the child, you would still list the Primary and Secondary Caregiver information like you would for any other child, but they will not be counted in the family of this child. Also, though the guardian may have other children living in the household with them and the Foster child, they do not need to be listed on the back of the application in the "Family Size" section.
- On the back of the application in the "Family Size" section, only list members of the child's family other than the Primary and Secondary Caregivers. To clarify, do not list the names of the PC and SC in this section. The "total number of family members" should include the members listed in this section as well as the child, PC, and SC.
- In the Transportation section, you must check whether the child will require the program to transport him to and from school. The selection that is listed should also be listed on COPA. Often times, we find that this question is either not entered on COPA or is entered incorrectly. Also in the transportation section, make sure that you list detailed directions to the child's home.
- In the Emergency Information section, it is required that you list 2 Emergency Contacts other than the parent(s). If the parent doesn't want to give permission for their child to be released to anyone other than themselves, there is no problem with that at all. However, they do need to provide 2 additional Emergency Contacts and it should be marked accordingly in this section meaning the "Emergency Contact" box should be checked for at least 2 people.
- If a child is not age eligible to currently enroll in the Head Start program, his/her application should not be logged on COPA. For instance, if a child will not turn 3 years of age until November 6, that means he will not be considered for enrollment this year so his application should not be placed on COPA. The exception to this rule is when the child has a diagnosed disability. In that case, the child's application can be placed on COPA near his 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday even if it is after the August 1 cutoff. Once a child has turned 3 years of age and has an IEP in place, that child should be considered for enrollment along with all other kids on the Eligibility Waiting List.

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*"If a child is not age eligible to currently enroll in the Head Start program, his/her application should not be logged on COPA"*

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**Regarding a Change of Status Form:** “A parent signature is only required when Emergency Contact Information is the information being changed”

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### **Change of Status Form**

- If there is a need later on to change the information given to you by the parent during the application process, a Change of Status Form should be used and placed in the folder. Do not change information on the hard copy application. Once a Change of Status Form has been completed, make sure you update the information on COPA.
- A staff member must sign the Change of Status Form regardless of the type of information being changed. However, a parent signature is only required when Emergency Contact Information is the information being changed. Since the Emergency Contact Information is something that assures the safety of their children, we must have them to sign their name to verify that they have requested the change.
- Many of you have asked questions about what information should be changed on COPA if reported to you by the parent. The simple answer to this is to use your Change of Status Form to determine that. In other words, only information that has an assigned section on the Change of Status Form needs to be changed on COPA. For instance, if a parent tells you that their phone number has changed, a Change of Status Form should be completed and put in the folder and the appropriate change should be made on COPA. But if a parent reports to you that she has now lost her job and is unemployed, you won't find a section for that on the Change of Status Form which means that you should not change her employment status on COPA. The following items are the only ones that require a Change of Status Form:
  - Name changes
  - Address or phone changes
  - Directions to home or drop off / pick up locations
  - Change of insurance
  - Emergency Contact Information
  - Parental Status (*additional information identified on the Change of Status Form*)

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*“If a parent lists “Other” or “Homeless” in the Current Housing section of the enrollment application, the interviewer MUST complete a Family Residence Questionnaire for that family”*

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### **Family Residency Questionnaire**

- The Family Residency Questionnaire (FRQ) is used to determine whether a family should be classified as homeless under the guidelines set forth in the McKinney-Vento Act. However, the interviewer should be careful not to imply homelessness to the parent due to the sensitivity of the term. If the FRQ shows that the family would be identified as homeless, you do not ask for any income documentation for this family. You will still need to fill out the Eligibility Verification Form but income documentation is not required.

- Not every family will need to have a FRQ completed. If a parent lists “Other” or “Homeless” in the Current Housing section of the enrollment application, the interviewer MUST complete a FRQ for that family.
- One common misconception is that if a family is living with others and do not own a home, they must be homeless. Not true. In many cases, families are living with relatives due to convenience or preference. The key is to find out why the living situation is occurring. If a parent tells the interviewer that she and her family are living with her parents, then the interviewer should have follow-up questions to try and figure out the circumstances. For instance, if the parent tells you that she, her husband, and her daughter are living with her parents, it may be because her parents are elderly and she provides care for them. You should not automatically assume they are homeless.
- Once it has been determined by the FRQ that a family is homeless, the eligible child should be enrolled in the program ASAP without delay from typical program procedures.

### **Eligibility Verification Form**

*The Eligibility Verification Form is one of the most important documents in our Head Start Program. The information that a staff member records on this form is placed under intense scrutiny by federal reviewers during their on-site visits. For that reason, we place a lot of emphasis on making sure that staff fill out this form correctly. To assure that this form (and certain other eligibility documents) is completed correctly, random selections are monitored not once, but twice, by the Grantee staff during the year.*

- The EV form should be completed interview style with the parent in the same manner as the enrollment application. A staff person should never give this form to the parent to fill out.
- The EV form should be completed during the application process. Appropriate income and age documentation should be placed in the folder with the EV form.
- The number of family members listed on the EV form should match the number listed on the enrollment application. This would include the child, caregivers, and other family members.
- There are two gray sections on the EV form that are extremely important and must always be addressed. Both sections contain questions for the staff member to answer: Is the child age eligible, and is the child income eligible? Both questions must be answered by checking the appropriate boxes.
- When filling out the EV form with the parent, the staff person should always ask for a birth certificate to verify the child’s birth. But there are many times when parents cannot produce one and another form of birth verification must be used. Under the Age Documentation section, there are five options that can be selected to identify what form of birth verification was used. However, there are certain ones that must be kept in the enrollment folder. If birth is verified by using the TANF list, it would make it very difficult to place that in the child’s folder because other children that show up on the same page would have to be deleted for confidentiality

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*“Whatever you marked on the EV form to verify birth should remain that way regardless of future documents obtained”*

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*“When verifying income by using pay stubs, the parent must be able to produce income for the preceding month, not just any random month”*

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purposes. If an immunization certificate is used to verify birth, that certificate is kept in the Health Folder so it doesn't make sense to keep it in the Enrollment Folder as well. So if you have used the TANF list or immunization certificate to verify a child's birth, it does not have to be placed in the Enrollment Folder. If you have used the actual birth certificate or a hospital certificate, it does have to be placed in the Enrollment Folder. One important thing to note is that whatever you marked on the EV form to verify birth should remain that way regardless of future documents obtained. In other words, if age was initially verified by using a hospital certificate and then a month later the parent brings in a birth certificate, the staff person should not go back and change the age documentation to birth certificate. If an official birth certificate is not produced by the parent at the beginning of the school year, the program must obtain one as soon as possible. Any folder that does not have an official birth certificate during the record review will be marked as out of compliance if the child has been enrolled for a significant amount of time.

- When asking a parent about their income, there are many acceptable forms of documentation to prove their income level. But the interviewer should always ask for tax forms or pay stubs as the first option.
- If a parent has multiple forms of income (i.e. child support and employment wages), each form of income should have its own documentation. So the same parent would be listed twice on the EV form with two different amounts of income listed, both of which would count in the annual total.
- When using pay stubs, unemployment statements, etc. to verify income, you must see documentation for an entire, consecutive month that ended no more than 30 days prior to the date you are reviewing them. When you have received the income documentation, the Eligibility Verification Sheet must be completed within 30 days. This means that there should not be more than a 60 day period between the last day of the pay period on the pay stub and the day that the staff member signed the Eligibility Verification sheet.
- Within the income section of the EV form, the “Income Schedule” and “Income Period” must be marked to correctly agree with the income documentation. Here are some clarifications:
  - INCOME SCHEDULE: The income schedule is determined by the form of income documentation that the parent is able to produce. For instance, if the parent used their W-2 employment form to prove their income, then the appropriate income schedule selection would be “Yearly” because the W-2 shows the total amount for a 12 month period. If the parent used pay stubs from their employer, it would depend on the pay period listed on their stubs to determine the income schedule. Some people are paid weekly, while others may be paid bi-weekly. You may also have people who are paid on 2 specific days each month (semi-monthly). When accepting pay stubs from a parent, it is important to ask them how much time is included in the pay period you are reviewing so you will know what to mark on the income schedule.
  - INCOME PERIOD: The biggest mistake that occurs with marking the income period is when it doesn't correspond with what has been marked on the income schedule. For instance, if someone has used a 1040 tax

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*“To utilize the Current Situation option, a parent must be able to verify their current situation has been occurring for at least the previous month”*

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*“The child should be listed on the EV sheet as the one receiving the Foster or Kinship money, not the guardian.”*

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form to verify income, marked the income schedule as “Yearly”, but then marked the income period as “Previous 12 Months,” this would be incorrect. The reason is because if a tax form was used, that means that the income period should have been “Previous Calendar Year”. Previous 12 months would have incorrectly indicated that the tax form showed income for the 12 month period preceding the time of the interview/application. It would be just as incorrect to list previous calendar year if pay stubs were used to verify income.

- There is a third choice that can be listed for income period: Current Situation. The purpose for giving the option of “Current Situation” is because the previous 12 months or previous calendar year may not always tell the true situation for a family and their financial condition may have changed dramatically since then. We don’t want to punish a family in need that would qualify for the program today, just because they may not have qualified last year. To utilize the “Current Situation” option, a parent must be able to verify their current situation has been occurring for at least the previous month. Here is an example: A woman comes to fill out an application for her child. She tells the interviewer that she worked as a nurse for 6 years but was fired 3 months ago. She says that she got a job at Wal-Mart two months ago and is still working there. Because the current situation will show a much truer picture for this family, the staff person should ask for her Wal-Mart pay stubs from the previous month and use them to verify income. To clarify how this income would be recorded, the amount of money shown on the pay stubs would be treated like any other pay stubs meaning you would multiply by the appropriate income schedule to show an annual total. Even though the parent had not worked for an entire year, you will still multiply by the appropriate income schedule to show how much she would make annually. Do not make the mistake of taking only the amount that this parent made at Wal-Mart **in the past two months** and counting that as the total annual income. You must project the annual income based on the pay stubs you obtain when using the current situation option. The money she was previously making as a nurse should not be counted.

- When verifying a child’s eligibility, there are three situations that would prohibit the staff person from requesting all income documentation from the family. They are as follows:
  - The child applying is in Foster or Kinship. In this case, the child is automatically eligible and only the money received for Foster/Kinship care would be used for documentation and listed as income on the EV sheet. The child should be listed on the EV sheet as the one receiving the Foster or Kinship money, not the guardian.
  - Someone in the family of the applying child is receiving TANF or SSI. In this case, the child is automatically eligible and only the money received in TANF or SSI benefits would be used for documentation and listed as income on the EV sheet. The money should be listed for the caregiver, not for the child. (*Note: It does not matter who is receiving the benefits, as long as the person is in the child’s household and counted in his/her family - the child is automatically eligible*)

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**Regarding the “0” Income Form:** “The answers on this form should be given only by the parent”

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*“If the “0” Income Form is used, then that means that there should not be any income listed on the EV sheet”*

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- After completing the Family Residency Questionnaire with the parent, the staff person designates the family as homeless. In this case, the child is automatically eligible and no income documentation should be obtained or recorded on the EV form. The EV form will be completed as normal but the entire income section should be left blank if the family has been deemed homeless. Do not complete a “0” income form on a homeless family because we do not need to inquire about their income.

### **“0” Income Form**

- In the rare situation when a parent does not have any income, the staff person must fill out the “0” Income Form with the parent. Like the enrollment application and other documents, this form is not meant to be given to the parent but rather filled out interview style by the staff member. The “0” Income Form has specific questions that must be answered. Keep in mind that the answers on this form should be given only by the parent. In other words, it is not intended to include statements or documents from other individuals confirming that they provide assistance to that family. Only the parent should be the one explaining the answers to those questions.
  - There should not be any specific amounts listed on the “0” income form. If the parent tells us that her father pays all the bills for the family, we do not need to ask how much that costs.
  - If the “0” Income Form is used, then that means that there should not be any income listed on the EV sheet. If there was income to speak of on the EV form, then a “0” Income Form should not have been used. Even if the family had “0” income for a portion of the year, the “0” Income Form should not be used if the EV form shows that there was income.
  - When interviewing the parent and trying to decide if it is a true “0” income family, remember that if the parent is being given money as a gift with nothing in return, that isn’t considered income. However, if the parent is being given money for a service or return action, that would be considered income.

### **Reverification**

- Once a child has been accepted into the Head Start program, he/she is given an enrollment slot for the entire school year as well as the following year as long as:
  - He/she is age eligible to return the following year
  - He/she is still enrolled at the end of the previous year. If not, the child would not be given an automatic enrollment slot for the following year.

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*“In order to enroll a child for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year, the program MUST reverify the information”*

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*“When a child withdraws or is terminated from the program, there is no obligation to reenroll this child at any time in the future”*

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*“If the enrollment application or EV form for a child is more than 12 months old, all enrollment information must be reverified for enrollment consideration”*

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- An event hasn't occurred that may force the program to consider other children for enrollment instead of allowing children to automatically return for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year. For example, if a disaster happened in or near our region of the magnitude that we saw with Hurricane Katrina that created thousands of homeless families overnight, we would work to assure that we are enrolling the neediest children in our area regardless of what our procedure had been in the past.
- A “Returning Child”, according to our policy, is a child that was enrolled in our HS program at the end of the school year. If a child was not enrolled at the end of the year, he/she is not automatically given a slot for the upcoming year. If a child was withdrawn from the program prior to the last day of school and the parent wants him/her to be considered for enrollment for the following year, he/she will be placed on the COPA Eligibility Waiting List and selected only if he/she receives enough eligibility points.
- If a child was enrolled during the school year as a PIR Age 2 year old (meaning he/she turned 3 years of age after the August 1 cutoff), he/she is given an enrollment slot for the remainder of that school year as well as the following school year. However, a PIR Age 2 year old would be age eligible for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year as well. We do not want to serve a child for 2 years and then remove him from the classroom if he is still not age eligible to attend Kindergarten. But in order to enroll a child for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year, the program MUST reverify the information. This means that the application, income, Eligibility Verification form, and any other relevant enrollment information must be redone to show the current situation for that child. As long as the child was enrolled at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, this child will be automatically given the enrollment slot in the program regardless of what the reverification information may show. If the child was listed as Underincome in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of enrollment but after reverifying in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year it shows that the child's family would now be Overincome, then the program will identify the child as Overincome but will not place him/her in the order of points on the Eligibility Waiting List. This child will be automatically selected and does not have to be at the top of the Eligibility Waiting List.
- When a child withdraws or is terminated from the program, there is no obligation to reenroll this child at any time in the future nor is the parent given any promise of such. Therefore, if the parent wishes to reenroll the child again after the child was terminated previously, the child must be placed on the Eligibility Waiting List and considered along with all other children. If the child does not have enough eligibility points to rank at the top of the list, he/she is not the next selection for enrollment. This same process holds true each and every time that a child is withdrawn from the program.
- If the enrollment application or Eligibility Verification form for a child is more than 12 months old, all enrollment information must be reverified for enrollment consideration. For instance, a child was enrolled for a period of time last year but withdrew toward the end of the school year. The parent wants to reenroll the child for the upcoming year. When the staff person reviews the enrollment application and Eligibility Verification Form

for this child, if the date is more than 12 months from the time the child would potentially enroll, all information must be completely redone.

### Recruitment

Each program funded under our agency is responsible for recruiting their own children from their service area. The Delegate Director will designate a time during the Spring to notify the public that their Head Start staff will be actively seeking enrollment applications for children that are age eligible. Staff will be available at multiple locations to meet with parents and fill out applications and place children on the waiting list. Advertisements, flyers, events, etc. are all used as effective recruitment tools to find income eligible children. There will be a conscience effort to inform the public that children with diagnosed disabilities will receive additional eligibility criteria points.

Every program has a certain number of funded slots that they must fill prior to the start of the school year and maintain as the year continues. Using the actual enrollment (total # of children served) from the previous school year, program administrators have a good sense of how many child applications will be needed during recruitment. As the year progresses, there may be a need for additional recruiting methods depending on the turnover of enrolled children. If the Eligibility Waiting List for a program has an adequate number of children to replace the projected number who may withdraw from the program, there will typically not be any further recruitment necessary.

We understand that every member of the Head Start program plays a part in recruitment with the interaction they have with members of the community. Though only certain staff are required to formally recruit children, each person must be aware of the effect that we all have on the public view of our program which relates directly to how many families will want to enroll their children.

### Selection & Enrollment

- The BSACAP Grantee and Delegate Head Start Programs use the same criteria for determining the eligibility of children. This list of criteria is reviewed and approved each year by Policy Committees, Policy Council, and the BSACAP Governing Board of Directors. The criteria are listed on COPA with the appropriate point value assigned. As child enrollment applications are loaded on the COPA system, they are automatically assigned a point total based on the information and are lined up from highest to lowest on the Eligibility Waiting List. Therefore, the child that is listed at the top of the Eligibility Waiting List is viewed as the “most needy” and

selected for enrollment first. This process should continue in order down the list without skipping over any children.

- The BSACAP and its delegates accept the federally funded number of children prior to the first day of school. This selection period usually takes place by mid-July so that parents can be contacted in a timely manner to let them know their child has been accepted. The children that actually show up on the first day are then officially enrolled in the program. This designation is made on our data system by moving the children from the “Accepted List” to the classroom list of enrolled children. For those accepted children that do not show up on the first day, a contact is made to their parent to see if there is still an interest. If not, the next eligible child on the waiting list is selected and the parents are contacted. After the first day of school, each program must reach their full funded enrollment within 30 days. Once full enrollment is achieved, it must be maintained throughout the school year. When a child withdraws from the program at any point during the year, another child must be selected and enrolled within 30 calendar days. The only exception to this rule is when there are only 60 calendar days remaining in the school year. When that threshold is crossed, we do not replace any child that withdraws from the program.
- Once a child has been enrolled, he/she will be allowed to remain in the program until they become age eligible for kindergarten enrollment. However, if a child entered the program as a “PIR age 2 year old” meaning they were given enrollment in a school year that their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday was after August 1, programs will need to reverify all information for the child including income documentation as well as a new enrollment application prior to the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> enrollment year.
- If a child withdraws from the program at any time during the school year, he/she will be placed on the Ineligible/Terminated list on COPA until the parent contacts the office to say that the child is ready to return. If the parent does in fact contact the program asking for their child to be considered for enrollment again, the child is not given special consideration and is only reenrolled if he/she is the child at the top of the waiting list when a slot becomes available.
- Since all forms and procedures are the same for each of our 7 programs, the transfer process for a child that has moved from one of our service areas to the other is very painless. When the child withdraws from one of our programs and wishes to enroll in another of our programs, their information can be transferred effortlessly by following our policies and procedures. If the application and eligibility verification is more than 12 months old, this information must be completed again based on the transferring date by the program that the child is applying with. If the information is less than 12 months old, the program can accept all eligibility information for this child and place them on the waiting list. The child is not given special consideration for enrollment merely because he/she was enrolled in another one of our programs.

- Each program must maintain a minimum of 90% income eligible children enrolled at all times during the program year. In addition, by December 1 of each school year, a minimum of 10% of enrolled children must have diagnosed disabilities and continue as such throughout the remainder of the year. *Note: These rules only apply until there are 60 calendar days or less in the school year at which point if a child withdraws, he/she is not replaced.*
- Within the mandatory 90% of income eligible enrollment, we do allow a provision for children whose family income falls between 1-30% above the poverty guidelines. A program can enroll a maximum of 25% of children from that demographic. These children are not given as many eligibility points on the waiting list as children under the poverty guideline, but can still be considered part of our “income eligible” statistics until the 25% enrolled mark is crossed. Programs will still actively recruit children with family incomes under the poverty guideline and only accept children from the 1-30% category when efforts have failed to produce lower income children to fill vacant slots.
- **YOU DO NOT SKIP CHILDREN ON THE WAITING LIST** when selecting them for enrollment. **There are only three unlikely potential situations that may be exceptions to this rule:**
  - *If a program is in danger of not having a minimum of 10% disability enrollment and need to select children with IEPs that were not at the top of the list. This action would need prior approval from the Grantee Office.*
  - *If the selection of a 4 year old child is necessary in order to keep from crossing the age threshold in a classroom that would affect the maximum enrollment number in that classroom. This action would need prior approval from the Grantee Office.*
  - *If a program has not accepted their minimum number of 4 year old children to meet the requirements of “Full Utilization” and need to skip over 3 year old children to achieve their number. This action would need prior approval from the Grantee Office.*
- A 3<sup>rd</sup> year returning child does not fall under the guidelines mentioned above. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year child’s information must be reverified, but regardless of the situation found with income or any other factor when this reverification takes place, the child will automatically receive an enrollment slot.
- A child diagnosed with a disability is not automatically eligible for the HS program. They are given additional eligibility points due to the disability, but they are not automatically eligible. The only 3 situations that will make a child automatically eligible are being a Foster/Kinship child, homelessness identified by the FRQ form, or the receipt of TANF or SSI by the child or a family member of the child.

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*“A child diagnosed with a disability is not automatically eligible for the HS program”*

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### **Accepting Children**

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*“An Eligibility Points Information Sheet should be printed and placed in the child’s folder each time that child enrolls”*

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*“When a child has been moved from the Eligibility Waiting List to the Eligible/Accepted List on COPA, it is at that time that the Eligibility Points Information must be printed”*

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*“A Head Start program is required to accept their full funded enrollment of children before the first day of school”*

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- Prior to the beginning of the school year, someone in the Delegate Program must be responsible for notifying the Grantee Office that their full funded enrollment has been accepted on COPA and the Eligible/Accepted List can now be printed for documentation. An e-mail should be sent to the Grantee Office prior to the first day of school to let us know that we can print your Eligible/Accepted List.
- A Head Start program is required to accept their full funded enrollment of children before the first day of school. That means that if your program is funded for 100 slots, there should have been 100 letters of acceptance sent to parents, and 100 children showing on your COPA Eligible/Accepted List prior to the day school begins. **No more, no less.**
- You must give some prior notice to the parents that their child is accepted into the program so that means you must know exactly which children you are accepting at least a few days before school begins. Programs should not wait until the last minute to make decisions on who will be accepted because this does not give the children and their parents ample time to prepare for such a huge event in the child’s life.
- All programs must set a “cut-off date” to stop accepting applications or at least stop loading applications on COPA for initial enrollment consideration. Whatever cut-off date is used by the program must be submitted to the Grantee Office prior to the beginning of the school year so that a review can be conducted, using this date, to assure that the appropriate children were selected.
- Once you have submitted a cut-off date, do not load any more applications on COPA until notified by the Grantee Office, which will normally occur 1-2 weeks after school has started. This gives our office an opportunity to review the enrollment process for each program and not be misled by applications that were not considered.
- An Eligibility Points Information Sheet (Points Sheet) should be printed and placed in the child’s folder each time that the child enrolls. For instance, if a child enrolls at the beginning of the year, withdraws in September, and enrolls again in December, there should be 2 Points Sheets in his folder. This does not apply to children that return for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Children enrolled at the end of a school year that are automatically returning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year should not have another Points Sheet placed in their folder.
- The Eligibility Points Information Sheet should have a print date.
- When a child has been moved from the Eligibility Waiting List to the Eligible/Accepted List on COPA, it is at that time that the Eligibility Points Information (Points Sheet) must be printed. This period is prior to enrollment, but after the child was accepted. There are two specific reasons for printing the Points Sheet for each child at that particular time. Keeping in mind that the purpose of having the Points Sheet in the folder is to show the situation for the child when he was accepted, here are the two reasons:
  - If you print the page PRIOR to accepting the child, the Points Sheet may not show the accurate information that will show up on the COPA Snapshot because staff can make changes to the child’s information (and frequently do) while the child is still on the Eligibility Waiting List. If you print the page, then change

something on the child's data sheet, and THEN move the child to the Eligible/Accepted List, the Points Sheet and the Snapshot will have different information. That's no good.

- If you print the page AFTER enrolling the child, the same problem may exist. Many of you may not be aware of this but when you print the Points Sheet, it will show the information that was current for the child on that day. So for example, let's say a child was enrolled on the first day of school in August. But the staff person did not go in and print the Points Sheet until the middle of September. Between those times, the child was placed in Foster Care, which would mean that the parental status, income, etc. was changed for this child. So when the Points Sheet was printed, it looked completely different than the Snapshot. The Points Sheet would lead the reviewer to believe that the child was enrolled because he was a Foster Child, which would not be true. Hopefully, everyone can see the reasoning why the Points Sheet must be printed while the child is on the Eligible/Accepted list.
- When a child is voluntarily or involuntarily withdrawn from the program, he should be terminated from the classroom on COPA and left on the Ineligible/Terminated List. He should not be placed on the Eligibility Waiting List at that time. The only time that a child should be moved from the Terminated List to the Eligibility Waiting List is when a parent tells the program to consider his/her child for enrollment again.
- If a parent turns down an enrollment opportunity for his/her child, that child should be moved from the Eligibility Waiting List to the Ineligible/Terminated List. Leaving the child on the Waiting List would give the false appearance that he/she is waiting to enroll. The child could only be moved back to the Waiting List if the parent contacts the program to say that their child is now ready to enroll if another opportunity arises.
- Programs should not officially enroll any child on the COPA system until he/she has physically arrived. You must "accept" your full funded enrollment before the first day of school, but you will only enroll the ones that show up.

### Attendance

All parents will be notified during orientation about the program's attendance policy. Though this program is voluntary for all families, it is necessary to stress the importance of child attendance to the parents so they have a clear understanding that their children are expected to attend each day the classroom is in operation. Children are only counted in attendance if they are present on-site.

A child will be counted in attendance if he/she physically comes to the classroom for any period of time during the daily hours of operation. A child will not be counted in attendance if he/she is off-site receiving Head Start required screenings/exams, such as a dental exam, unless the child comes to the classroom at some point during the day.

Attendance for each enrolled child will be recorded daily by the classroom teacher on the COPA tracking system. For those children that are absent, a contact will be made to the parent and the reason will also be logged into COPA. At the end of the month, delegate and grantee staff will review the attendance for each classroom to assure each day has been marked. The attendance percentages will be compiled and presented to Policy Committee, Policy Council, and the Governing Board.

Each program as well as each classroom is expected to achieve a total of 85% average daily attendance. When this 85% goal cannot be reached, we must analyze the reasons why. In order to analyze the reasons appropriately, the teaching staff must have an understanding of how to log on attendance and required information for their classroom.

- Teaching staff will enter attendance information on the COPA Child Attendance & Meal Count each day. The staff will designate each meal that the child was served by checking the appropriate boxes:
  - B = Breakfast
  - L = Lunch
  - S = Snack
- In addition to identifying the meals that the children were served, the staff must do a Daily Health Check of each child. This does not mean an invasive evaluation, but rather just a quick look at the child's face, nose, arms, etc. to assure that the child is in good health with no signs of injury. If there are no signs of illness or injury, the staff does not need to document anything further. However, if the Daily Health Check reveals that the child is not in good health, the staff person must then check the box designated as: H = Health, and then follow the procedure for "Daily Health Checks" that can be found on the agency website under Policies & Procedures.
- For those children that were counted as being absent on the Child Attendance & Meal Count, additional information must be provided. The teaching staff must list whether the excuse is "Excused" or "Unexcused" (Examples of excused absences can be found in the "Attendance" policy on the agency website). The staff must also list the type of contact that they had with the parent and the reason given for the absence.
- When a Head Start classroom is not in operation (the children are not in attendance) on a particular day, it is the responsibility of the Delegate to assure that the teaching staff or other appointed staff member has listed the day

as a “Non-Class Day” or “Non-Scheduled Day”. It is not important which selection is made, just that one of them is used.