

Eligibility Tips

Complete Applications

- Complete applications should be sent to Diane at the Admin office.
- Applications are good for the entire year they were created for as long as the person remains on the waitlist.
- If a child doesn't get enrolled in the year they applied for, they have to redo their application to be considered for the following school year.
- If a family drops because they moved and later in the same program year they return to our area, they will have to re-do their application. Their eligibility ends as soon as they terminate from our program.
- Once a child is enrolled as income eligible, their eligibility will not change for that year and the year following. However, if a child drops during one program year then their eligibility will have to be re-determined for the following year.
- All complete applications should be sent to Diane
- The Head Start definition of income has NOT changed.
 - *Income* means gross cash income and includes earned income, military income (including pay and allowances, except those described in Section 645(a)(3)(B) of the Act), veteran's benefits, Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and public assistance benefits. Additional examples of gross cash income are listed in the definition of "income" which appears in U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60-185 (available at <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/popscan/p60-185.pdf>).

Incomplete applications

- A Head Start or Early Head Start application is incomplete if it is missing any of the following:
 - Proof of birth (unless foster or homeless, though both still need to be encouraged to get this)
 - Proof of income (or proof of TANF, SSI, or homelessness)
 - Allergy Action Plan and/or Asthma Health Plan. (only if needed and only for Head Start. You do not have to pass these out to any EHS children.)
- Incomplete applications should be sent to Crystal at the Admin office. She will go ahead and enter it in ChildPlus and will put a note in enrollment notes describing exactly what is needed to make the file complete.
 - You can see the incomplete applications by looking at your participant list on the left side of your ChildPlus screen and clicking on "Change List". Once the box comes up, under "Status" check "New" and under "Filter by Application Status", check "Incomplete". You are responsible for continuing to check and try to obtain the needed items to move them to the complete list. If you need a letter sent to the family because of no contact, let me know and I will send it.

Age requirement

- Early Head Start will do an application and can enroll prenatal moms until the child is 2.5 years old.
- Head Start children must be 3 on or before August 1 of the current program year unless they are an EHS transition.

Participant's Name

- The Head Start program has to enroll children based on their legal names. We can note a nickname the mom wishes the child to be called, but in and on our records, we have to use the child's legal name. If the child's first or last name has changed, the parent will have to bring in a legal document before we can change the child's name in our records.

Referrals

- A referral has to come from a reliable source such as doctor, First Steps, etc.
- It must come to us on letterhead or an official referral from the referring agency (not our referral form).
- It must give a reason for referring the child.
- It can't come from within our own program.

Documentation

- Do NOT use cell phones to take pictures of documentation for an application. We have the hand held scanners for this now.
- This method will no longer be accepted per Mrs. Beeler in June 2015.

Pregnant Women

- If a teenager, only count HER income
- If a pregnant woman is applying to EHS, she counts as 2 people toward her eligibility. If her 2 year old child is applying, the unborn baby does not count toward his eligibility.

Child Support Verification

- The docket dates need to reflect the same dates the eligibility form has on it

Social Security

- If a sibling of an applying child is receiving Social Security Survivor benefits, this is not to be considered a part of the applying child's income.

Family

- Only income earned by the applying child's parents, legal guardian, or authorized caregiver should be included when determining eligibility. The income of other family members sharing the residence should not be included.
- The family size is to be determined by including all persons living in the household who are supported by the income of the child's parents/guardians/authorized caregiver AND related to these persons by blood, marriage, or adoption.
- If a child's parent or parents is deployed, the family size is determined by adding together the parent (s), the child applying, any siblings that are supported by the child's parents and anyone else related by blood, marriage, or adoption that the parent's income supports.
- If mom's boyfriend is not the father of the child applying, we do not need his income. He has no legal relationship to the mother or the child. He is also not included in the family number. In ChildPlus, he will be listed in the notes under the child's name as someone who also lives in the home. If they get married, we have a different situation.

Joint Custody

- If the parents have joint physical custody and neither is paying child support to the other, you must do an application with each parent. Send both application to me and I will put them together. In these cases, the parent's incomes get added together and divided by 2 to get the child's income. The number in the family is added together and divided by 2 also.

Income Statuses

Public Assistance

- The only 2 programs that Head Start puts into this category are TANF and SSI. To be determined eligible based on public assistance, the family must be receiving TANF or SSI **currently**. If they received it last year, that will count toward their income but will not make them automatically income eligible.
- SSI
 - If anyone in the family is receiving SSI, the award letter will say "Supplemental Security Income" on it somewhere. This has always been the case; I've never seen it happen any differently. So if it doesn't specifically say "Supplemental Security Income", do not count it as receiving public assistance! SSI and Social Security are paid out of 2 different pots of money but both sets of monies are filtered through the Social Security office. This is what makes it confusing for everyone.

Foster care

- If a child is determined a CHINS, we can consider that child a foster child. Even if the child is placed in the home of one of the biological parents or grandparents. (because the state retains custody as long as the child is a CHINS).
- If DCS is NOT involved and the child is not considered a CHINS, we do not consider the child to be in foster care and the income of parent/guardian/authorized caregiver will be considered for eligibility.
- Children in foster care are categorically eligible for Head Start regardless of their foster family's income.

Homeless

- Should be given a reasonable amount of time to obtain proof of birth (30 days)
- A child who is living with grandma because mom is in jail is not homeless.
- There are different ways a "family" can be homeless such as living in their car, doubled up with friends or family, living in a shelter, etc. I can only think of one way a child (in our community and age eligible) alone would be considered homeless and that is if they are temporarily placed in a foster home while DCS finds another foster home to take them.

Over Income

- Once a child is enrolled, we will change their eligibility if their income situation changes enough to warrant reverification. If the family is determined income eligible during the program year, we will change their "at enrollment" status to within income. This benefits the program. Be sure to turn in the information to data entry so it can be changed.

Forms

Income tax forms

- Provide both pages of tax forms. I don't need all the extra pages, but must have the front page and the page that gets signed.
- Remember that child support is not included on tax forms, but it has to be included in the family income.
- Per "Eligibility Final Rule: Frequently Asked Questions", a program may use any U.S. federal tax form or paper to verify family income.

Zero Income Form

- If it's a 2 parent home and 1 has no income but both are listed on tax forms, we do not need a zero income form filled out.
- If a family claims zero income, we need to determine if the family has no income from any source, how are they providing for on-going needs like food and housing? Be sure to document this on the zero income form.

Undocumented Income Form

- If the family has no method of proving income they've had, we can use this form to help determine the amount.