

Eligibility

Head Start Performance Standards

§ 1302.12

Policy

All children and prenatal participants in Community Action Head Start and Early Head Start programs must be age eligible and met eligibility requirements and reside in Washington County. Children enrolled in our Coffee Creek program may live in other areas. Program Assistants who have been trained to support the eligibility determination process will provide assistance as needed for application completion. The Program Assistants interview the family over the telephone if an in-person interview is not possible or convenient for the family. Community Action Head Start will maintain funded enrollment level and fill any vacancy within 30 days. The program will ensure that it is meeting the needs of eligible children and pregnant women before serving children and pregnant women who do not meet eligibility requirements.

Training on Eligibility

The Operations Manager will train the Board of Directors and Policy Council members within 180 days of the beginning of the program term on eligibility requirement. The Operations Manager will train newly hired Program Assistants and staff who make eligibility determination will be trained on applicable federal regulations and program policies and procedures by designated staff within 90 days of hire date. Training will continue annually as Performance Standards are updated. All training records will be kept on file in ChildPlus.

Age Requirements

- For Head Start, children must be at least three years old or turn three years old and no older than the age required to attend school when initially enrolled.
- For Early Head Start Full-Day Full-Year services, children must be at least six weeks of age and less than 36 months to participate in the program when initially enrolled.
- For the Early Head Start Home Based program, children must be less than 36 months of age.

Pregnant women in the Early Head Start Home-Based prenatal program can be any age and can be at any stage of their pregnancy.

Verifying Age

The Program Assistants will verify a child's age by using documents such as birth certificates, medical records, immunization records, court or other official documents to confirm a child's age. Program Assistants may use different official documents to substitute for birth certificates in order to remove barriers to enrollment. To verify requirements for women entering the prenatal program, proof of the pregnancy from an ultrasound or other medical record is needed.

Eligibility Requirements

A child or a pregnant woman is eligible when:

1. The child is homeless as defined by McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The term homeless means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, include:
 - sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack

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of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; awaiting foster care placement;

- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar setting
2. The child is in foster care.
 3. The family's income is equal to or below the Federal Poverty Guideline or
 4. The family is eligible for public assistance – TANF or Supplemental Security Income – SSI.

Verifying Eligibility

1. To verify homeless status, the Program Assistants will review "current housing information" on Enrollment Application form or gather any other documentation that indicates homelessness. *If the child is homeless accordance to McKinney Vento Act, the Program Assistants do not need to gather proof of income to verify eligibility.*
2. To verify foster care status, the Program Assistants will use a foster care placement letter from Oregon Department of Human Services.
3. To verify eligibility based on income, the Program Assistants must use proof of income such as tax return documents, pay stubs, written statements from employers, etc. The family must provide proof of income for the year preceding the year in which the application is submitted or within the 12 months preceding the month in which the application is submitted. If the family can't provide proof of income, the Program Assistants can conduct a phone interview with the family to verify family's income and family's size. The phone interview information must be recorded in ChildPlus under Enrollment Module.
4. To verify public assistance, the Program Assistants must use TANF award letter from Oregon Department of Human Services or SSI award letter from Social Security Administration Office.

Redetermination of Eligibility

A redetermination of eligibility is required:

1. If a child moves from an Early Head Start program to a Head Start program, the Program Assistants must verify the family's eligibility again.
2. Under exceptional circumstance, the program must reverify eligibility for a child's enrollment in Head Start program for a third year.

Eligibility Files and Records

Community Action Head Start program must keep hard copy of eligibility determination records for each child in a locked file cabinet. The program also keeps those eligibility determination records in ChildPlus. Program Assistants, management and staff who make eligibility determination will have access to view those electronic records.

Each Eligibility record or Main File includes:

- a. Copy of documents that use to verify eligibility
- b. Community Action Head Start Enrollment Application
- c. A statement that the Program Assistants verify family information and/or income information and/or homeless situation by conducting a phone interview with the family
- d. Eligibility verification checklist form which second review is done by the Program Assistant.
- e. Document that is collected from third party regarding the family's eligibility

Eligibility determination records will be kept as long as children are enrolled into the program and for one year after they have either stopped receiving services; or are no longer enrolled with the program.