



Subpart A

Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

Standard Operating Procedures

*Aligned with the 2024 Head Start Program
Performance Standards
(Standards 1302.10 -1302.18)*

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OVERVIEW (45 CFR §1302.1)

This part implements the statutory requirements outlined in Sections 641A, 645, and 645A of the Head Start Act. It establishes the program performance standards that govern the operation of Head Start Preschool, Early Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs.

These standards address the full scope of program operations—from the identification and enrollment of eligible children and families to the delivery of comprehensive services that support school readiness, family well-being, and child development. The standards also include requirements for program governance, fiscal and operational management, and ensuring staff are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported to deliver high-quality services.

A central focus of this part is the use of data for ongoing monitoring, continuous quality improvement, and informed decision-making to strengthen program effectiveness and outcomes for children and families.

Consistent with the Head Start Act, these provisions do not diminish the scope or quality of services established in previous regulations. Instead, they elevate expectations by incorporating research-based practices, promoting equity and responsiveness to community needs, and simplifying requirements to improve clarity and implementation across programs.

Subpart A – Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

PURPOSE

This subpart describes requirements of grant recipients for determining community strengths, needs, and resources as well as recruitment areas. It contains requirements and procedures for this eligibility determination, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance of children and explains the policy concerning the charging of fees.

PROCEDURE

Community Services of Northeast Texas (CSNT) implements ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance) policies and procedures that align with federal requirements and support effective program operations.

1. **Community Assessment and Recruitment**

CSNT ERSEA policies and procedures outline the process for assessing community strengths, needs, and resources, and for identifying and defining recruitment areas based on those findings.

2. **Eligibility, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance**

CSNT ERSEA policies and procedures establish clear guidelines for determining eligibility and for carrying out recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance practices in accordance with federal standards.

3. **Fees**

CSNT does not charge any fees for participation in Head Start or Early Head Start services.

DETERMINING COMMUNITY STRENGTHS, NEEDS, AND RESOURCES. (Standard 1302.11)

(a) Service area.

(1) A program must propose a service area in the grant application and define the area by county or sub-county area, such as a municipality, town or census tract or jurisdiction of a federally recognized Indian reservation.

(i) A tribal program may propose a service area that includes areas where members of Indian tribes or those eligible for such membership reside, including but not limited to Indian reservation land, areas designated as near reservation by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) provided that the service area is approved by the tribe's governing council, Alaska Native Villages, Alaska Regional Corporations with land-based authorities, Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Areas, and Tribal Designated statistical Areas where federally recognized Indian tribes do not have established reservations.

(ii) If the tribe's service area includes any area specified in paragraph (a)(1)(i) of this section, and that area is also served by another program, the tribe may serve children from families who are members of or eligible to be members of such tribe and who reside in such areas as well as children from families who are not members of the tribe, but who reside within the tribe's established service area.

(2) If a program decided to change service area after ACF has approved its grant application, the program must submit to ACF a new service area proposal for approval.

PROCEDURE

1. CSNT Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start service areas are established and clearly defined within the approved grant application, based on identified community needs and resources.
2. If changes to the service area are necessary after approval of the grant application, CSNT will submit a formal service area change request, including an amended proposal, to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for review and approval prior to implementation.

(b) Community wide strategic planning and needs assessment (Community Assessment). (Standard 1302.11(b))

(1) A program must conduct a comprehensive community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period and annually review and update if any significant changes are needed as described in paragraph (b)(5) of this section to:

(i) Identify populations most in need of services including prevalent social or economic factors, challenges, and barriers experienced by families and children;

- (ii) Inform the program's design and to ensure equitable, inclusive, and accessible service delivery that reflect needs and diversity of the community;
 - (iii) Inform the enrollment, recruitment, and selection process to prioritize the enrollment of those populations with relevant circumstances identified under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section;
 - (iv) Identify strengths and resources in the community that can be leveraged for service delivery, coordination, and partnership efforts for education, health, nutrition, and referrals to social services to eligible children and families; and,
 - (v) Identify the communication methods and modalities available to the program that best engage with prospective and enrolled families in accessible ways.
 - (vi) The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expected mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including:
- (2) In conducting the community assessment, a program must collect and utilize data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources and include at a minimum:
 - (i) Relevant demographic data about eligible children; and expectant mothers, including:
 - (A) Race and ethnicity
 - (B) Children living in poverty
 - (C) Children experiencing homelessness in collaboration with, to the extent possible, McKinney-Vento Local Education Agency Liaisons (42 U.S.C. 11432(6)(A))¹¹;
 - (D) Children in foster care;
 - (E) Children with disabilities, including social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being; and
 - (F) Geographic locations and languages they speak;
 - (ii) The education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors, challenges, and barriers to program participation such as transportation needs;
 - (iii) Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;
 - (iv) Other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local pre-schools, and the approximate number of eligible children served and their ages;

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PROCEDURE

1. **Community Assessment Cycle**

CSNT conducts a comprehensive Community Assessment at least once during each five-year grant period to identify community strengths, needs, and available resources.

2. **Use of Data**

The Community Assessment utilizes current and relevant data to describe populations most in need of services, including social and economic factors, barriers to participation, and community demographics. This data informs program design, service delivery, and ERSEA processes.

3. **Required Data Elements**

The Community Assessment includes, at a minimum:

- a. The number, geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages of eligible children and expectant families;
- b. Children and families living in poverty;
- c. Children and families experiencing homelessness, in coordination with McKinney-Vento liaisons when possible;
- d. Children in foster care;
- e. Children with disabilities and related service needs;
- f. Education, health, nutrition, and social service needs, including barriers such as transportation;
- g. Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents;
- h. Availability of early childhood programs and services, including child care, pre-kindergarten, and home visiting programs;
- i. Community resources, including culturally and linguistically responsive supports;
- j. Community strengths; and
- k. Gaps in resources, including housing, health care, food access, employment support, and early childhood services.

4. **Data Collection Approach**

CSNT uses a strategic approach to identify and gather relevant data from multiple sources, including community partners, school districts, state agencies, and existing data systems, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the service area.

5. **Annual Review and Updates**

CSNT reviews and updates the Community Assessment at least annually to identify significant changes in demographics, community needs, and available resources. This review includes consideration of:

- Changes affecting children and families experiencing homelessness;
- Equity, accessibility, and inclusiveness of services;
- Availability and impact of publicly funded pre-kindergarten; and
- Findings from program self-assessment and planning processes.

6. **Program Planning and Continuous Improvement**

CSNT uses Community Assessment data to guide program design, set priorities, support continuous quality improvement, and ensure responsive and equitable service delivery.

7. **Consideration of Diverse Economic Backgrounds**

CSNT evaluates community characteristics and available funding sources to determine the feasibility of serving children from diverse economic backgrounds without reducing enrollment of eligible children. The program ensures that enrollment remains at or above funded levels while maximizing available resources.

PROCEDURE

1. Conducting the Interview

Family Empowerment Advocate (FSA) conduct an in-person interview with the parent/guardian upon receipt of the application to complete the eligibility determination process.

2. Verification of Information

During the interview, Family Empowerment Staff verify required eligibility information, including the child's age and family income. Additional documentation may be reviewed to determine categorical eligibility when applicable.

3. Clarification and Follow-Up

Family Empowerment Staff may ask follow-up questions during the interview to ensure all eligibility criteria are fully understood and accurately documented.

4. Alternate Interview Methods

If an in-person interview is not possible or creates a hardship for the family, a telephone or virtual interview may be conducted. The reason for not completing the interview in person must be documented in the child's record.

5. Documentation of Eligibility Determination

Family Empowerment Staff generate and maintain the required eligibility determination record in ChildPlus (e.g., Report 2135 or current system equivalent). This documentation is placed in the child's file in accordance with program recordkeeping procedures.

6. Emergency or Special Circumstances

In situations such as public health emergencies or other extenuating circumstances, interviews may be conducted using alternative methods (e.g., phone or virtual platforms) to ensure continued access to services while maintaining compliance with eligibility requirements.

Age Requirements. (Standard 1302.12(b))

(1) For Early Head Start, except when the child is transitioning to Head Start, a child must be an infant or a toddler younger than three years old.

(2) For Head Start Preschool, a child must:

(i) Be at least three years old or, turn three years old by the date used to determine eligibility for public school in the community in which the Head Start program is located; and,

(ii) Be no older than the age required to attend school.

(3) For Migrant or Seasonal Head Start, a child must be younger than compulsory school age by the date used to determine public school eligibility for the community in which the program is located. Not Applicable to CSNT Head Start.

PROCEDURE

1. Early Head Start (EHS) Age Requirements

Children enrolled in Early Head Start must be infants or toddlers under the age of three at the time of enrollment.

2. Transition to Head Start

Children may continue to receive Early Head Start services until they transition to Head Start Preschool upon reaching age three, in accordance with transition procedures.

3. Head Start Preschool Age Requirements

Children must be at least three years old by September 1 (or the date used by the local school district to determine kindergarten eligibility) to enroll at the start of the Head Start program year.

4. Mid-Year Enrollment

Children who turn three after the program year begins may be enrolled after their third birthday, if a funded slot is available. Children with diagnosed disabilities may be enrolled upon turning three, as appropriate.

5. Kindergarten Eligibility

Children who are eligible for kindergarten based on the local school district's age requirements are not eligible for enrollment in Head Start Preschool.

6. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start

This provision does not apply to CSNT Head Start programs.

7. Eligibility requirements. (Standard 1302.12(c))

(1) A pregnant woman or a child is eligible if:

- (i) The family's income is equal to or below the poverty line; or,**
- (ii) The family is eligible for or, in the absence of child care, would be potentially eligible for public assistance; including TANF child-only payments; or,**
- (iii) The child is homeless, as defined in part 1305; or**
- (iv) The child is in foster care.**

(2) If the family does not meet a criterion under paragraph (c)(1) of this section, a program may enroll a child who would benefit from services, provided that

these participants only make up to 10 percent of the program's enrollment in accordance with paragraph (d) of this section.

8. Additional allowances for programs.

(1) A program may enroll an additional 35 percent of participants whose families do not meet a criterion described in paragraph (c) of this section and whose incomes are below 130 percent of the poverty line.

(i) Establishes and implements outreach, and enrollment policies and procedures to ensure it is meeting the needs of eligible pregnant women, children, and children with disabilities before serving pregnant women or children who do not meet criteria in paragraph (c) of this section; and,

(ii) Establishes criteria that ensure pregnant women and children eligible under the criteria listed in paragraph (c) of this section are served first.

(2) If a program chooses to enroll participants who do not meet a criterion in paragraph (c) of this section, and whose family incomes are between 100 and 130 percent of the poverty line, it must be able to report to the Head Start regional office.

9. Additional allowances for Indian Tribes.

(Does not pertain to CSNT Head Start)

10. Migrant or Seasonal eligibility requirements.

(Does not pertain to CSNT Head Start)

11. Eligibility requirements for communities with 1,000 or fewer individuals.

(Does not pertain to CSNT Head Start)

PROCEDURE

1. Income-Eligible Enrollment (At Least 90%)

At least ninety percent (90%) of enrolled children must be from families who meet one or more of the following eligibility criteria:

- Family income at or below the Federal Poverty Guidelines;
- Families receiving public assistance such as TANF or SSI (including child-only TANF);
- Children experiencing homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act; or
- Children in foster care.

These children are considered categorically eligible regardless of income level when applicable.

2. **Homelessness Eligibility**

Families identified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act are categorically eligible and will be prioritized for enrollment.

3. **Foster Care Eligibility**

Children in foster care are categorically eligible for services regardless of family income.

4. **Enrollment up to 130% of Poverty (Up to 35%)**

After ensuring that all categorically and income-eligible children have been served, CSNT may enroll up to thirty-five percent (35%) of children whose family income is between 100% and 130% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, in accordance with program policies and federal requirements.

5. **Over-Income Enrollment (Up to 10%)**

Up to ten percent (10%) of total enrollment may consist of children from families whose income exceeds 130% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. These children may only be enrolled after all eligible children who wish to participate have been given the opportunity to enroll.

6. **Prioritization of Eligible Children**

CSNT ensures that children who meet categorical and income eligibility criteria are prioritized for enrollment before enrolling children who fall within the 100–130% or over-income categories.

7. **Monitoring and Reporting**

CSNT maintains documentation and tracking to ensure compliance with enrollment percentages and is able to report enrollment data to the Regional Office as required.

12. **Verifying age. (Standard 1302.12(h))**

Program staff must verify a child's age according to program policies and procedures. A program's policies and procedures cannot require families to provide documents that confirm a child's age, if doing so creates a barrier for the family to enroll.

PROCEDURE

1. **Verification of Age**

Program staff verify a child's age by reviewing available documentation, which may include a birth certificate, hospital record, verification of birth facts, or other reliable documents that confirm the child's date of birth.

2. **Reducing Barriers to Enrollment**

Families are not required to provide official or specific documents (such as a certified birth certificate) if obtaining such documentation would create a barrier to enrollment. Program staff will work with families to accept alternative forms of documentation to verify age.

3. **Documentation of Verification**

Program staff document the method used to verify the child's age in the child's record, in accordance with CSNT policies and procedures.

(i) Verifying eligibility. (Standard 1302.12(i))

- (1) To verify eligibility based on income, program staff must use tax forms, pay stubs, or other proof of income to determine the family income for the relevant time period.**
- (i) The program must calculate total gross income using applicable sources of income.**
 - (ii) A program may make an adjustment to a family's gross income calculation for the purposes of determining eligibility to account for excessive housing costs. A program may use available bills, bank statements, and other relevant documentation provided by the family to calculate total annual housing costs with appropriate multipliers to'**
 - (A) Determine if a family spends more than 30 percent of their total gross income on housing costs, as defined in part 1305 of this chapter; and,**
 - (B) If applicable, reduce the total gross income by the amount spent on housing costs that exceed more than 30 percent.**
 - (iii) If the family cannot provide tax forms, pay stubs, or other proof of income for the relevant time period, program staff may accept written statements from employers, including individuals who are self-employed, for the relevant time period and use information provided to calculate total annual income with appropriate multipliers.**
 - (iv) If the family reports no income for the relevant time period, a program may accept the family's signed declaration to that effect, if program staff describes efforts made to verify the family's income, and explains how the family's total income was calculated or seeks information from third parties about the family's eligibility, if the family gives written consent. If a family gives consent to contact third parties, program staff must adhere to program safety and privacy policies and procedures and ensure the eligibility determination record adheres to paragraph (k)(2) of this section.**
 - (v) If the family can demonstrate a significant change in income for the relevant time period, program staff may consider current income circumstances.**
- (2) To verify whether a family is eligible for, or in the absence of child care, would be potentially eligible for public assistance, the program must have documentation from either the state, local or tribal public assistance agency that shows the family either receiver public assistance or that shows the family is potentially eligible to receive public assistance.**

(3) To verify whether a family is homeless, a program may accept a written statement from a homeless services provider, school personnel, or other service agency attesting that the child is homeless or any other documentation that indicates homelessness, including documentation from a public or private agency, a declaration, information gathered on enrollment or application forms, or notes from an interview with staff to establish the child is homeless; or any other document that establishes homelessness.

(i) If a family can provide one of the documents described in the paragraph (i)(3), program staff must describe efforts made to verify the accuracy of the information provided and state whether the family is eligible because they are homeless.

(ii) If a family cannot provide one of the documents described in this paragraph (i)(3) to prove the child is homeless, a program may accept the family's signed declaration to that effect, if, in a written statement, program staff describe the child's living situation that meets the definition of homeless in part 1305 of this chapter.

(iii) Program staff may seek information from third parties who have firsthand knowledge about a family's living situation, if the family gives written consent. If the family gives consent to contact third parties, program staff must adhere to program privacy policies and procedures and ensure the eligibility determination record adheres to paragraph (k) of this section.

(4) To verify whether a child is in foster care, program staff must accept either a court order or other legal or government-issued document, a written statement from a government child welfare official that demonstrates the child is in foster care, or proof of a foster care payment.

PROCEDURE

1. Income Verification Timeframe

Families must provide income documentation reflecting a relevant time period, typically within the past 12 months or current income circumstances when there has been a significant change.

2. Acceptable Proof of Income

Acceptable documentation includes tax returns, W-2 forms, pay stubs, or written statements from employers (including self-employed individuals). Staff calculate total gross income using all applicable income sources.

3. Pay Stub Requirements (if tax forms unavailable)

If tax forms are unavailable, families may provide:

- One (1) pay stub for monthly income;
- Two (2) pay stubs for bi-weekly or semi-monthly income;

- Four (4) pay stubs for weekly income.
These are used to estimate annual income accurately.
- 4. **Housing Cost Adjustment (if applicable)**
Bank statements and other relevant documents (e.g., rent receipts, utility bills) may be used to determine housing costs. If a family spends more than 30% of gross income on housing, an adjustment may be applied in accordance with regulations.
- 5. **No Income or Insufficient Documentation**
If income documentation is unavailable, Family Empowerment Staff may accept:
 - Third-Party Verification;
 - Self-Declaration; or
 - Zero Income Statement.
Staff must document all efforts made to verify income and how income was determined.
- 6. **Public Assistance Verification**
Families receiving public assistance must provide documentation from the appropriate agency (e.g., TANF, SSI). This confirms categorical eligibility.
- 7. **Homelessness Verification**
Families experiencing homelessness may provide documentation such as:
 - A statement from a service provider or school personnel; or
 - A completed residency or declaration form.
If documentation is not available, staff may accept a signed family declaration and must document the living situation and verification efforts in the eligibility record.
- 8. **Foster Care Verification**
Families must provide a court order, official documentation, or written statement from a child welfare agency confirming the child's foster care status.
- 9. **Staff Enrollment Safeguards**
When staff members enroll their own children, eligibility determination and income verification must be reviewed and approved by the Family Engagement Coordinator to ensure objectivity and compliance.
- 10. **Documentation and Recordkeeping**
All eligibility determinations, supporting documentation, and calculations are recorded on the approved Income Calculation Worksheet and maintained in the child's file in accordance with program policies.

(j) Eligibility duration. (Standard 1302.12(j))

(1) If a child is determined eligible under this section and is participating in a Head Start program, he or she will remain eligible through the end of the succeeding program year except that the Head Start program may choose not to enroll a child when there are compelling reasons for the child not to remain in Head Start, such as when there is a change in the child's family income and there is a child with a greater need for Head Start Services.

(2) Children who are enrolled in a program receiving funders under the authority of section 645A of the Act remain eligible while they participate in the program.

(3) If a child moves from an Early Head Start program to a head Start Preschool program, the program staff must verify the family's eligibility again.

(4) If a program operates both an Early Head Start and a Head Start Preschool program, and the parents wish to enroll their child who has been enrolled in the program's Early Head Start, the program must ensure, whenever possible, the child receives Head Start Preschool services until enrolled in the school, provided the child is eligible.

(5) *(Not applicable – for Migrant and Seasonal Programs)*

PROCEDURE

1. Head Start Preschool Eligibility Duration

Once a child is determined eligible and enrolled in Head Start Preschool, the child remains eligible through the end of the succeeding program year.

2. Continued Enrollment Considerations

CSNT may determine not to continue enrollment in rare and compelling circumstances, such as when a child with a greater need for services requires placement. Any such decisions must be well-documented.

3. No Reverification Requirement

Staff do not recalculate or reverify income during the eligibility period unless the child withdraws and later seeks to re-enroll.

4. Early Head Start Eligibility Duration

Children enrolled in Early Head Start remain eligible for services while they are participating in the program.

5. Transition from Early Head Start to Head Start

When a child transitions from Early Head Start to Head Start Preschool, program staff must complete a new eligibility determination and verify all required documentation.

6. Transition Priority

CSNT ensures, whenever possible, that children transitioning from Early Head Start are prioritized for enrollment in Head Start Preschool, provided they remain eligible.

(k) Records. (Standard 1302.12 (k))

(1) A program must keep eligibility determination records for each participant and ongoing records of the eligibility training for staff required by paragraph (m) of this section. A program may keep these records electronically.

- (2) Each eligibility determination record must include:**
- (i) Copies of any documents or statements, including declarations, that are deemed necessary to verify eligibility under paragraph (h) and (i) of this section;**
 - (ii) A statement that program staff has made reasonable efforts to verify information by:**
 - (A) Conducting either an in-person, or telephone interview with the family as described under paragraph (a)(1)(i) or (a)(2) of this section; and,**
 - (B) Describing efforts made to verify eligibility, as required under paragraphs (h) through (i) of this section; and, collecting documents required for third party verification that includes the family's written consent to contact each third party, the third parties' name, titles, and affiliations, and information from third parties regarding the family's eligibility.**
 - (iii) A statement that identifies whether:**
 - (A) The family's income is below income guidelines for its size, and lists the family's size;**
 - (B) The family is eligible for or, in the absence of child care, potentially eligible for public assistance;**
 - (C) The child is a homeless child or the child is in foster care;**
 - (D) The family was determined to be eligible under the criterion in paragraph (c)(2) of this section; or,**
 - (E) The family was determined to be eligible under the criterion in paragraph (d)(1) of this section.**
- (3) A program must keep eligibility determination records for those currently enrolled, as long as they are enrolled, and, for one year after they have either stopped receiving services; or are no longer enrolled.**

PROCEDURE

1. Maintenance of Eligibility Records

Eligibility determination records are maintained for each enrolled child and are stored in the child's file (electronic and/or hard copy) in accordance with CSNT recordkeeping procedures.

2. Required Documentation

Each child's file contains all documentation used to verify eligibility, including income records, third-party verifications, declarations, and any supporting documents. These are organized within the eligibility or income section of the file.

3. Eligibility Determination Record

The eligibility determination record is generated through ChildPlus (e.g., Report 2135 or current system equivalent) and includes all required components, such as:

- Verification documents;
- Documentation of interview type (in-person or phone);
- Description of efforts to verify eligibility; and
- Final eligibility determination and category.

4. Income Calculation Documentation

The Income Calculation Worksheet is completed for each applicable family, signed by the parent/guardian and Family Empowerment Staff, and reviewed and approved by the Family Engagement Coordinator to ensure accuracy and compliance.

5. Third-Party Verification Requirements

When third-party verification is used, documentation must include the family's written consent, the name and affiliation of the third party, and details obtained to verify eligibility.

6. Documentation of Verification Efforts

Staff must document all efforts made to verify eligibility, including cases involving no income, homelessness, or other special circumstances.

7. Record Retention

Eligibility determination records are maintained for currently enrolled children and retained for at least one (1) year after the child's last day of participation in the program, in accordance with federal requirements.

8. Confidentiality

All eligibility information and documentation are maintained confidentially in accordance with program privacy policies.

9. Staff Training Records

Records of eligibility determination training for staff are maintained and documented to ensure compliance with federal standards.

Eligibility Error Prevention and Review

CSNT implements internal controls to prevent, identify, and correct eligibility determination errors.

10. Second-Level Review

A second-level review of eligibility determinations is conducted by the Family Engagement Coordinator designee. Random file reviews are completed on a regular basis to ensure accuracy, completeness, and compliance with federal regulations.

11. **Ongoing File Monitoring**

Eligibility files are periodically monitored to verify that all required documentation, verification steps, and eligibility determination records are properly completed and maintained.

12. **Error Identification and Correction**

If errors or discrepancies are identified:

- Corrections are made promptly in accordance with program procedures;
- The correction and supporting documentation are clearly documented in the child's file; and
- Any potential impact on eligibility status is reviewed and resolved.

13. **Staff Retraining and Support**

Staff involved in eligibility determinations receive targeted retraining and technical assistance when errors are identified to prevent recurrence and strengthen compliance.

14. **Documentation of Reviews**

All file reviews, findings, corrective actions, and retraining efforts are documented and maintained for monitoring and compliance purposes.

(I) Program policies and procedures on violating eligibility determination regulations. (Standard 1302.12(I))

A program must establish written policies and procedures that describe all actions taken against staff who intentionally violate federal and program eligibility determination regulations and who enroll pregnant women and children that are not eligible to receive Head Start Services.

PROCEDURE

1. **Policy on Violations**

CSNT maintains written policies and procedures outlining actions taken when staff intentionally violate federal or program eligibility determination regulations or knowingly enroll ineligible children or pregnant women.

2. **Definition of Misconduct**

Any intentional falsification, misrepresentation, or failure to properly verify eligibility is considered a serious violation and may be classified as fraud.

3. **Training Requirements**

All staff involved in eligibility determination receive annual training on eligibility requirements, verification procedures, and fraud prevention. Staff must sign documentation acknowledging completion of this training and understanding of their responsibilities.

4. **Corrective and Disciplinary Action**

Violations of eligibility determination regulations are addressed in accordance with CSNT Personnel Policy 701 (Conduct and Work Rules). Disciplinary actions may include corrective action plans, suspension, or termination of employment, depending on the severity of the violation.

5. **Documentation and Oversight**

All violations, investigations, and resulting actions are documented and maintained in accordance with personnel and program policies. Program leadership ensures appropriate oversight to prevent future violations.

(m) Training on eligibility. (Standard 1302.12(m))

(1) A program must train all governing body, policy council, management, and staff who determine eligibility on applicable federal regulations and program policies and procedures. Training must, at a minimum:

(i) Include methods on how to collect complete and accurate eligibility information from families and third party sources;

(ii) Incorporate strategies for treating families with dignity and respect and for dealing with possible issue of domestic violence, stigma, and privacy; and,

(iii) Explain program policies and procedures that describe actions taken against staff, families or participants who attempt to provide or intentionally provide false information.

(2) A program must train management and staff members who make eligibility determinations within 90 days of hiring new staff.

(3) A program must train all governing body and policy council members within 180 days of the beginning of the term of a new governing body or policy council.

(4) A program must develop policies on how often training will be provided after the initial training.

PROCEDURE

1. Initial Staff Training

All staff responsible for determining eligibility must receive training within ninety (90) days of hire. Training includes ERSEA requirements for eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance.

2. Annual Training Requirements

Staff responsible for eligibility determination receive annual refresher training that includes updates to federal regulations, program policies and procedures, and best practices to ensure ongoing compliance.

3. Required Training Content

Eligibility training includes, at a minimum:

- Methods for collecting complete and accurate eligibility information from families and third-party sources;

- Strategies for treating families with dignity and respect, including sensitivity to issues such as domestic violence, stigma, and confidentiality; and
 - Program policies regarding the prevention, identification, and consequences of providing false or misleading information.
4. **Governing Body and Policy Council Training**
Governing Body and Policy Council members receive eligibility training within one hundred eighty (180) days of the start of their term. Training includes an overview of ERSEA requirements and updates to policies and procedures.
 5. **Ongoing Training and Monitoring**
CSNT provides ongoing training, technical assistance, and supervision to staff to ensure consistent and accurate eligibility determinations. Training frequency and content are reviewed and updated as needed based on program changes, monitoring results, or identified risks.
 6. **Documentation of Training**
All eligibility training is documented, including attendance records, training content, and signed acknowledgments from participants, and maintained in accordance with program recordkeeping requirements.

RECRUITMENT of CHILDREN (Standard 1302.13)

In order to reach those most in need of services, a program must develop and implement a recruitment process designed to actively inform all families with eligible children within the recruitment area of the availability of program services. A program must include modern technologies to encourage and assist families in applying for admission to the program, and to reduce the family's administrative and paperwork burden in the application and enrollment process. A program must include specific efforts to actively locate and recruit children with disabilities and other children in need, including children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care.

PROCEDURE

1. **Data-Driven Recruitment Planning**
The Family Engagement Coordinator develops and implements a recruitment plan based on current Community Assessment data to ensure outreach efforts are responsive to identified community needs.
2. **Priority Populations**
Recruitment efforts prioritize populations identified in the Community Assessment, including low-income families, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, families receiving public assistance, and children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities.
3. **Use of Modern Technology**
CSNT utilizes modern technology, including online applications and digital outreach, to reduce barriers, minimize administrative burden, and streamline enrollment for families.
4. **Targeted Community Outreach**
Family Empowerment Staff conduct outreach in locations frequented by income-eligible families,

including public assistance offices, homeless shelters, food banks, healthcare providers, and community centers.

5. Recruitment of Children with Disabilities

Mental Health Consultants and Family Empowerment Staff implement intentional strategies to identify and recruit children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities and ensure timely referral for evaluation, in collaboration with Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and healthcare and developmental service providers.

6. Marketing and Communication

The Family Engagement Coordinator develops and distributes recruitment materials, including flyers and digital content, which are shared throughout the community and on agency social media platforms.

7. Online Application Access

The online application system is reviewed and updated annually and made available to families to apply for the upcoming program year beginning in January.

8. Collaboration with School Districts

When appropriate, Family Empowerment Staff collaborate with local Independent School Districts (ISDs) to share recruitment materials and promote enrollment opportunities, including Round-Up events, through district websites and social media platforms.

9. Re-Enrollment Efforts

Family Empowerment Staff distribute re-enrollment applications to families of currently enrolled children to support continuity of services for the upcoming program year.

10. Spring Round-Up Activities

CSNT conducts Spring Round-Up activities beginning in February to maximize early identification and enrollment of eligible children, including those with disabilities.

11. Ongoing Application Acceptance

Applications are accepted year-round to ensure continuous access to services for eligible families.

12. Inclusive Messaging

Recruitment materials include clear, inclusive messaging that encourages the enrollment of children with disabilities and promotes equitable access to program services.

13. Evaluation of Recruitment Efforts

Recruitment activities and outcomes are reviewed regularly using program data to evaluate effectiveness and make adjustments to ensure outreach efforts successfully reach families with the greatest need.

14. Documentation of Recruitment Activities

All recruitment efforts, outreach activities, partnerships, and strategies are documented in accordance with CSNT policies and procedures to support monitoring and compliance.

SELECTION PROCESS (Standard 1302.14)

(a) Selection Criteria.

(1) A program must annually establish selection criteria that weigh the

prioritization of selection of participants, based on community needs identified in the community needs assessment as described in 132.11(b), and including family income, whether the child is homeless, whether the child is in foster care, the child's age, whether the child is eligible for special education and related services, or early intervention services, as appropriate, as determined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) and, other relevant family or child risk factors.

(2) (Not applicable – for Indian Tribes)

(3) If a program serves migrant or seasonal families, it must annually establish selection criteria that weighed the prioritization of selection of participants, based on community needs identified in the community needs assessment as described in 1302.11(b), and give priority to children whose families can demonstrate they have relocated frequently within the past two-years to pursue agricultural work.

(4) If a program operates in a service area where Head Start eligible children can enroll in high-quality publicly funded pre-kindergarten for a full school day, the program must prioritize younger children as part of the selection criteria in paragraph (a)(1) of this section. If this priority would disrupt partnerships with local education agencies, then it is not required.

(5) A program must deny enrollment based on a disability or chronic health condition or its severity.

(6) A program must consider the enrollment of children of staff members as part of the selection criteria in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

PROCEDURE

1. Establishment of Selection Criteria

CSNT annually establishes and reviews selection criteria based on data from the most recent Community Assessment. Criteria are designed to prioritize children and families with the greatest need for services.

2. Point-Based Ranking System

All eligible applicants are assigned points according to the established selection criteria. Applications are ranked, and children with the highest point totals are selected for enrollment.

3. Priority Populations

Selection criteria prioritize, at a minimum, the following:

- a. Children and families experiencing homelessness (McKinney-Vento Act);
- b. Children in foster care or receiving public assistance (TANF, SSI, SNAP);
- c. Families with incomes at or below the Federal Poverty Guidelines;
- d. Children with diagnosed disabilities or eligible for IDEA services;**
- e. Children transitioning from Early Head Start;
- f. Children from families with additional risk factors identified in the Community Assessment (e.g., barriers to employment, transportation needs, or family instability).

4. **Additional Considerations**

Additional factors may be considered to support family stability and program continuity, including:

- Siblings currently enrolled in the program;
- Parent/guardian status (e.g., single-parent households);
- Families receiving supportive services (e.g., SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, childcare assistance).

5. **Returning Children**

Children who are age-eligible and currently enrolled will be prioritized for continued enrollment into the next program year, provided they remain eligible under Head Start regulations.

6. **No Discrimination Based on Disability**

CSNT does not deny enrollment based on a child's disability or the severity of a chronic health condition. Children with disabilities are prioritized in alignment with federal requirements.

7. **Children of Staff**

Children of staff members may be considered within the selection criteria. To avoid conflicts of interest, every effort is made to ensure that staff are not directly assigned to their own child's classroom or case.

8. **Alignment with Community Needs**

Selection criteria and application questions are reviewed and updated at least annually to ensure alignment with current community needs and to effectively identify families with the greatest need for services.

9. **Special Program Considerations**

CSNT considers the availability of publicly funded pre-kindergarten in the service area and may prioritize younger eligible children when appropriate to ensure services reach those with the greatest unmet need.

10. **Governance Approval of ERSEA Activities**

CSNT ensures that all ERSEA-related policies and procedures are reviewed and formally approved in accordance with Head Start governance requirements. This includes:

- Selection criteria are reviewed annually and formally approved by the Policy Council and Governing Body prior to implementation
- The review and approval of ERSEA policies and procedures, including eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance practices; and
- The review of recruitment strategies and priorities to ensure alignment with Community Assessment data and program goals.

All approvals are documented in meeting minutes and maintained for monitoring and compliance purposes.

(b) Children eligible for services under IDEA. (Standard 1302.14(b))

(1) A program must ensure at least 10 percent of its total funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under IDEA, unless the responsible HHS

official grants a waiver.

- (2) If the requirement in paragraph (b)(1) of this section has been met, children eligible for serves under IDEA should be prioritized for the available slots in accordance with the program's selection criteria described in paragraph (a) of this section.

PROCEDURE

1. IDEA Enrollment Requirement (10%)

CSNT ensures that at least ten percent (10%) of total funded enrollment is made available to children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Enrollment is monitored monthly to ensure ongoing compliance. Funded enrollment includes 465 Head Start Preschool slots and 16 Early Head Start slots, with allowable temporary fluctuations due to partnerships and enrollment adjustments.

2. Identification and Prioritization

Children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities are prioritized through the program's selection criteria and assigned additional points to support enrollment opportunities.

3. Eligibility for IDEA Services

Children counted toward the 10% requirement must meet eligibility criteria for IDEA services, as determined through appropriate evaluation and identification processes.

4. Recruitment Efforts

CSNT conducts targeted recruitment efforts in collaboration with Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Early Intervention (EI) providers, and community partners to identify and enroll children with disabilities.

5. Ongoing Monitoring

Enrollment of children with disabilities is tracked and reviewed monthly to ensure compliance with the 10% requirement and to identify any needed adjustments in recruitment or placement.

6. Waiver Request (if necessary)

If CSNT is unable to meet the 10% requirement despite documented and sustained recruitment efforts, the program will submit a waiver request to the appropriate HHS official in accordance with federal regulations.

(c) Waiting lists. (Standard 1302.14(c))

A program must develop at the beginning of each enrollment year and maintain during the year a waiting list that ranks children according to the program's selection criteria.

(d) Understanding barriers to enrollment. (Standard 1302.14 (d))

A program is required to use data from the community assessment to identify the population of eligible children and families and potential barriers to enrollment and attendance, including using data to understand access to transportation for the highest need families. A program must use data to inform ongoing program

improvement efforts as described in 1302.102 to promote enrolling the children most in need of program services.

PROCEDURE

1. Ongoing Recruitment and Waitlist Maintenance

After full enrollment is reached, CSNT continues recruitment efforts throughout the program year in accordance with the ERSEA Plan to maintain a current and active waiting list.

2. Application Processing

Family Empowerment Advocate (FSA) receive applications and review them for completeness. An application is considered complete when it includes:

- A completed application form;
- Verified family income documentation;
- Age verification; and
- Required enrollment documentation.

Staff provide assistance to families as needed to ensure applications can be completed without barriers.

3. Application Accessibility

Applications are available both online and in hard copy formats and are provided in English and Spanish to ensure accessibility for families.

4. Incomplete Applications

Families with incomplete applications are notified and offered support. Children are not placed on the waiting list until all required documentation is received and the application is complete.

5. Waiting List Management

The waiting list is maintained in ChildPlus and ranks children based on the program's approved selection criteria to ensure those with the greatest need are prioritized for enrollment.

6. Use of Waiting List for Enrollment

Vacancies are filled from the waiting list in rank order based on the program's approved selection criteria to ensure that children with the greatest need are prioritized for enrollment.

Family Empowerment Advocate (FSA) select and enroll children in accordance with this ranking and document the selection decision to demonstrate compliance with ERSEA requirements.

7. Use of Data to Address Barriers

CSNT utilizes Community Assessment data and ongoing program data to identify barriers to enrollment and attendance, including transportation, access to services, and family needs.

8. Continuous Improvement

Data related to recruitment, waitlist trends, and enrollment barriers are reviewed regularly to inform program planning, improve outreach strategies, and ensure services are accessible to the highest-need populations.

ENROLLMENT (Standard 1302.15)

- (a) **Funded enrollment.** A program must maintain its funded enrollment level and fill any vacancy as soon as possible. A program must fill any vacancy within 30 days.
- (b) **Continuity of enrollment.**
 - (1) A program must make efforts to maintain enrollment of eligible children for the following year.
 - (2) Under exceptional circumstances, a program may maintain a child's enrollment in Head Start Preschool for a third year, provided that family income is verified again.
 - (3) If a program serves homeless children or children in foster care, it must make efforts to maintain the child's enrollment regardless of whether the family or child moves to a different service area, or transition child to a program in a different service area, as required in 1302.72 (a), according to the family needs.
- (c) **Reserved slots.** If a 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 three percent 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 in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section.
- (d) **Other enrollment.** Children from diverse economic backgrounds who are funded with other sources, including private pay, are not considered part of a program's eligible funded enrollment.
- (e) **State immunization enrollment requirements.** A program must comply with state immunization enrollment and attendance requirements, with the exception of the homeless children as described in 1302.16(c)(1).
- (f) **Voluntary parent participation.** 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.
- (g) **User friendly enrollment process.** A program must regularly examine their enrollment processes and implement any identified improvements to streamline the enrollment expenses for families.

PROCEDURE

Maintaining Funded Enrollment

CSNT maintains full funded enrollment throughout the program year. Vacancies are monitored daily to ensure timely enrollment within 30 calendar days

1. **Vacancy Tracking and Timely Placement**

Family Empowerment Advocate (FSA) monitor vacancies daily and promptly select children from the waiting list based on established selection criteria to ensure timely enrollment.

2. **Continuity of Enrollment**

CSNT makes every effort to retain eligible children for the subsequent program year to promote continuity of services and school readiness.

3. **Third Year Enrollment (Exceptional Circumstances)**

In limited and documented exceptional circumstances, a child may remain in Head Start Preschool for a third year, provided eligibility is reverified prior to continued enrollment.

4. **Services for Homeless and Foster Care Children**

CSNT ensures continuity of services for children experiencing homelessness or in foster care. Children may remain enrolled at their current center, when feasible, even if the family relocates outside the service area, or staff will assist with transition to another program based on family needs.

5. **Reserved Enrollment Slots**

Based on Community Assessment data, CSNT may reserve up to three percent (3%) of funded enrollment slots for children experiencing homelessness or in foster care.

- If a reserved slot is not filled within 30 days, it is released and filled in accordance with standard vacancy procedures.

6. **State Immunization Requirements**

CSNT complies with all applicable state immunization requirements for enrollment and attendance, while ensuring that children experiencing homelessness are not excluded due to lack of documentation, in accordance with regulations.

7. **Voluntary Parent Participation**

Parent or guardian participation in program activities is voluntary and is not required as a condition for a child's enrollment or continued participation.

8. **Accessible and User-Friendly Enrollment Process**

CSNT regularly reviews and improves enrollment procedures to ensure they are accessible, efficient, and responsive to family needs, reducing barriers to enrollment.

ATTENDANCE (Standard 1302.16)

(a) **Promoting regular attendance.** A program must track attendance for each child.

(1) A program must implement a process to ensure children are safe when they do not arrive at school. If a child is unexpectedly absent and a parent has not contacted the program within one hour of program start time, the program must attempt to contact the parent to ensure the child's wellbeing.

(2) A program must implement strategies to promote attendance. At a minimum, a program must:

- (i) Provide information about the benefits of regular attendance;**
 - (ii) Support families to promote the child's regular attendance;**
 - (iii) Conduct a home visit or make other direct contact with a child's parents if a child has multiple unexplained absences (such as two consecutive unexplained absences); and,**
 - (iv) Within the first 60 days of program operation, and on an ongoing basis thereafter, use individual child attendance data to identify children with patterns of absence that put them at risk of missing ten percent of program days per year and develop appropriate strategies to improve attendance among identified children, such as direct contact with parents or intensive case management, as necessary.**
 - (v) Examine barriers to regular attendance, such as access to safe and reliable transportation, and where possible, provide or facilitate transportation for the child if needed.**
- (3) If a child ceases to attend, the program must take appropriate efforts to reengage the family to resume attendance, including as described in paragraph (a)(2) of this section. If the child's attendance does not resume, then the program must consider that slot vacant. This action is not considered expulsion as described in 1302.17.**

PROCEDURE

1. Daily Attendance Tracking

CSNT tracks daily attendance for each child to monitor participation and identify attendance concerns.

2. Child Safety Follow-Up

If a child is unexpectedly absent and the parent/guardian has not notified the program within one hour of the program start time, Family Empowerment Advocate (FSA) will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

3. Promoting Regular Attendance

CSNT implements strategies to promote regular attendance, including:

- Educating families on the importance and benefits of consistent attendance;
- Encouraging family engagement and communication;
- Reinforcing attendance expectations during parent meetings and ongoing interactions.

4. **Monitoring Attendance Patterns**

Within the first 60 days of enrollment and on an ongoing basis, Family Empowerment Staff review individual attendance data to identify children at risk of missing 10% or more of program days.

5. **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

When attendance concerns arise (e.g., two or more consecutive unexplained absences or patterns of absenteeism):

- Staff will contact the family to discuss barriers;
- A home visit or direct contact will be conducted, as appropriate;
- Individualized strategies will be developed to support improved attendance.

6. **Barrier Identification and Support**

Family Empowerment Staff assess barriers to attendance (e.g., transportation, health issues, family challenges) and connect families with available resources or supports to help maintain regular attendance.

7. **Excused Absences**

Acceptable reasons for absences may include:

- Illness, hospitalization, or medical conditions;
- Medical, dental, or therapy appointments;
- Family emergencies, including death in the family;
- Communicable illnesses or temporary health conditions;
- Weather or program closures;
- Other documented family circumstances affecting attendance.

Documentation (such as a parent note or medical verification) is collected when appropriate.

8. **Re-Engagement Efforts**

If a child stops attending, staff will make documented efforts to re-engage the family, including phone calls, home visits, and support services.

9. **Vacancy Determination**

If re-engagement efforts are unsuccessful and the child does not resume attendance, the slot will be considered vacant and filled in accordance with enrollment procedures. This action is not considered expulsion.

10. **Documentation of Attendance Actions**

All attendance-related activities, including parent contacts, follow-up attempts, home visits, identified barriers, and implemented interventions, are fully documented in the child's record. Documentation must reflect the date, method of contact, outcome, and any follow-up actions taken.

(b) Managing systematic program attendance issues. (Standard 1302.16(b)) If a program's monthly average daily attendance rate falls below 85 percent, the

program must analyze the causes of absenteeism to identify any systematic issues that contribute to the program's absentee rate. The program must use the data to make necessary changes in a timely manner as part of ongoing oversight and correction as described in 1302.102(b) and inform its continuous improvement efforts as described in 130.1025(c).

PROCEDURE

1. Monitoring Attendance Rates

CSNT monitors monthly average daily attendance (ADA) to ensure it remains at or above 85 percent.

2. Analysis of Attendance Below 85%

If attendance falls below 85%, administrative and program staff will analyze attendance data to identify trends, patterns, and root causes contributing to absenteeism (e.g., transportation issues, illness, family needs, scheduling barriers).

3. Identification of Systemic Issues

Staff will review program-wide and site-level data to determine whether absenteeism is linked to broader systemic issues affecting multiple families or locations.

4. Corrective Action and Program Improvements

Based on data analysis, CSNT will implement timely and appropriate corrective actions, which may include:

- Adjustments to program schedules or services;
- Enhanced family engagement strategies;
- Increased support services or referrals;
- Transportation or access solutions; and/or
- Staff training or process improvements.

5. Ongoing Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Attendance data and improvement strategies are reviewed regularly as part of ongoing oversight. Findings are used to inform continuous quality improvement efforts in accordance with program goals and requirements under 1302.102.

6. Documentation

All analyses, identified issues, and corrective actions are documented and maintained for monitoring and compliance purposes.

(c) Supporting attendance of homeless children. (Standard 1302.16(c))

- 1. If a program determines a child is eligible under 1302.12(c)(1)(iii), it must allow the child to attend for up to 90 days or as long as allowed under state licensing requirements, without immunization and other records, to give the**

family reasonable time to present these documents. A program must work with families to get children immunized as soon as possible in order to comply with state licensing requirements.

- 2. If a child experiencing homelessness is unable to attend classes regularly because the family does not have transportation to and from the program facility, the program must utilize community resources, where possible, to provide transportation for the child.**

PROCEDURE

- 1. Enrollment Without Immunization Records**

Children experiencing homelessness are allowed to enroll and attend the program without required immunization or health records for up to the period permitted by Texas state licensing requirements (up to 30 days).

- Family Empowerment Advocate (FSA) will work closely with families to obtain required documentation as soon as possible.
- Staff will also assist families in accessing immunization services and other health resources to ensure compliance within the allowable timeframe.

- 2. Transportation Support**

If a child experiencing homelessness is unable to attend regularly due to lack of transportation, CSNT will collaborate with community partners and available resources to support transportation needs whenever possible.

- 3. Family Support and Follow-Up**

Family Empowerment Staff maintain ongoing contact with families experiencing homelessness to monitor progress in obtaining required documents and to address barriers impacting consistent attendance.

- 4. Documentation**

All efforts to support enrollment, attendance, and document collection for children experiencing homelessness are documented in the child's record.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (Standard 1302.17)

(a) Limitations on suspension.

(1) A program must prohibit or severely limit the use of suspension due to a child's behavior. Such suspensions may only be temporary in nature.

(2) A temporary suspension must be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a serious safety threat that has not been reduced or eliminated by the provision of interventions and supports recommended by the mental health consultant and the program needs time to put additional appropriate services in place.

(3) Before a program determines whether a temporary suspension is necessary, a program must engage with a mental health consultant, collaborate with the parents, and utilize appropriate community resources – such as behavior coaches, psychologists, other appropriate specialist, or other resources – as needed, to determine no other reasonable option is appropriate.

(4) If a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, a program must help the child return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensure child safety. A program must explore all possible steps and document all steps taken to address the behavior(s) and supports needed to facilitate the child’s safe reentry and continued participation in the program. Such steps must include, at a minimum:

- (i) Continuing to engage with the parents, mental health consultant, and other appropriate staff , and continuing to utilize appropriate community resources;**
- (ii) Providing additional program supports and services including home visits; and**
- (iii) Determining whether a referral to a local agency responsible for implementing IDEA is appropriate or if the child has an individualized Family Empowerment plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP), consulting with the responsible agency to ensure the child receives the needed support services.**

PROCEDURE

1. Prohibition and Limitation

CSNT prohibits expulsion and severely limits the use of suspension. Temporary suspension is only used in extraordinary circumstances involving a serious safety threat.

2. Behavior Documentation

When a child exhibits persistent or significant challenging behaviors:

- Teaching staff document behaviors, including dates, times, frequency, and descriptions;
- Management staff, Education Coordinators, and/or consultants observe the classroom and document findings.

3. Collaboration and Intervention

Prior to considering any suspension:

- Staff engage the Mental Health Consultant;
- Parents/guardians are contacted and invited to participate in collaborative discussions;

- Appropriate specialists and community resources (e.g., behavior specialists, psychologists) are consulted.

4. **Planning and Support Strategies**

Based on collected data and team input:

- A Behavior Support or Behavior Modification Plan is developed with family participation;
- The plan includes individualized strategies, classroom supports, and clear goals;
- Home visits and additional family support services may be implemented.

5. **Consideration of IDEA Services**

If appropriate, the child may be referred to the Local Education Agency (LEA) for evaluation to determine eligibility for services under IDEA. If the child already has an IFSP or IEP, CSNT coordinates with the responsible agency to ensure appropriate supports are in place.

6. **Temporary Suspension (Last Resort Only)**

If all interventions have been implemented and a serious safety concern remains:

- A temporary suspension may be used only as a last resort;
- The program must document all steps taken prior to this decision;
- The suspension must be as brief as possible.

7. **Reentry and Continued Support**

CSNT prioritizes the child's return to full participation as quickly as possible by:

- Continuing collaboration with parents, mental health consultants, and specialists;
- Updating and strengthening behavior support strategies;
- Providing additional services, including home visits and individualized supports.

8. **Documentation**

All actions, interventions, consultations, and decisions related to behavior support and any suspension must be fully documented in the child's record.

(b) Prohibition on expulsion. (Standard 1302.17(b))

(1) A program cannot expel or unenroll a child from Head Start because of a child's behavior.

(2) When a child exhibits persistent and behavioral concerns, a program must explore all possible steps and document all steps taken to address such problems and facilitate the child's safe participation in the program. Such steps must include, at a minimum, engaging a mental health consultant, considering the appropriateness of providing appropriate services and supports under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the child who satisfies the definition of disability in 29 U.S.C. 705(9)(b) of the

Rehabilitation Act is not excluded from the program on the basis of disability, and consulting with the parents and the child's teacher, and:

(i) If the child has an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education plan (IEP), the program must consult with the agency responsible for the IFSP or IEP to ensure the child receives the needed support services; or,

(ii) If the child does not have an IFSP or IEP, the program must collaborate, with parental consent, with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to determine the child's eligibility for services.

(3) If, after a program has explored all possible steps and documented all steps taken as described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, a program, in consultation with the parents, the child's teacher, the agency responsible for implementing IDEA 9if applicable), and the mental health consultant, determines that the child's continued enrollment presents a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children and determines the program is not the most appropriate placement for the child, the program must work with such entities to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.

PROCEDURE

1. Prohibition on Expulsion

CSNT does not expel or unenroll a child from the program due to a child's behavior.

2. Response to Challenging Behavior

When a child exhibits persistent or serious challenging behaviors, CSNT implements a comprehensive, team-based approach that includes:

- Engaging the parent/guardian as active partners in addressing concerns;
- Collaborating with classroom staff to implement appropriate strategies;
- Consulting with the Mental Health Consultant to assess behavior and recommend interventions;
- Utilizing community resources and specialists, as appropriate.

3. Individualized Supports and Planning

Based on assessment and collaboration:

- Individualized behavior support plans are developed and implemented;
- Additional services such as home visits and family support are provided;
- Program staff document all interventions, supports, and progress.

4. IDEA and Section 504 Consideration

- If the child has an IFSP or IEP, CSNT collaborates with the responsible agency to ensure all services are implemented as required.
- If the child does not have an IFSP or IEP, CSNT works with the parent/guardian and, with written consent, refers the child to the Local Education Agency (LEA) for evaluation under IDEA.
- CSNT also considers eligibility for supports under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure the child is not excluded on the basis of disability.

5. **Transition to a More Appropriate Placement (Rare Circumstances)**

Only after:

- All appropriate interventions and supports have been implemented and documented;
- Ongoing consultation has occurred with the parent/guardian, Mental Health Consultant, teaching staff, and IDEA representatives (if applicable); and
- The child's continued enrollment presents a serious and ongoing safety risk;

CSNT may determine that the current program is not the most appropriate placement. In such cases, CSNT will:

- Work collaboratively with the family and relevant agencies;
- Directly facilitate a smooth and supported transition to a more appropriate placement;
- Ensure continuity of services for the child to the greatest extent possible.

6. **Documentation**

All steps, including observations, consultations, parent communications, interventions, referrals, and transition efforts, are thoroughly documented in the child's record.

FEES (Standard 1302.18)

(a) Policy on fees.

A program must not charge eligible families a fee to participate in Head Start, including special events such as field trips, and cannot in any way condition an eligible child's enrollment or participation in the program upon the payment of a fee.

(b) Allowable fees.

(1) A program must only accept a fee from families of enrolled children for services that are in addition to the services funded by Head Start, such as child care before or after funded Head Start hours. A program may not condition a Head Start child's enrollment on the ability to pay a fee for additional hours.

(2) In order to support programs serving children from diverse economic backgrounds or using multiple funding sources, a program may charge fees to private pay families and other non-Head Start enrolled families to the extent

allowed by any other applicable federal, state or local funding sources.

PROCEDURE

No Fees for Head Start Services

CSNT does not charge any fees to eligible families for participation in Head Start or Early Head Start services, including program activities such as field trips or special events.