



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 (Standard 1302.1)

This part implements the statutory requirements in Sections 641A, 645, 645A of the Act by describing all of the program performance standards that are required to operate Head Start Pre-K/Early Head Start, American Indian and Alaska Native and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. These parts cover the full range of operations from enrolling eligible children and providing program services to those children and their families, to managing programs to ensure that staff are qualified and supported to effectively provide services. This part also focuses on using data through ongoing program improvement to ensure high-quality service. As required in the Act, these provisions in this part do not narrow the scope or quality of the services covered in previous regulations. Instead, the regulations in this part raise the quality standard to reflect science and best practices, and streamline and simplify requirements so programs can better understand what is required for quality services.

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

CSNT ERSEA Policies and Procedures describe the requirements for determining community strengths, needs, and resources as well as recruitment area.

1. CSNT ERSEA policies and procedures describe determinations for recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance.
2. CSNT does not charge fees. (Standard 1302.11)

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. The CSNT Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start service area is determined in the grant application.
2. If there are any changes to the service area determination after the grant application has been approved by ACF, CSNT will submit an amended grant application with a proposed new service area for ACF approval.

(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;

(v) Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; especially transportation resources and culturally appropriate and responsive supports;

(vi) Strengths of the community; and,

(vii) Gaps in community resources in areas relevant to addressing the needs of eligible children and their families such as gaps in health and human services, housing assistance, food assistance, employee assistance, early childhood development and social services.

(3) Program should have a strategic approach:

(i) To determine what data to acquire to reach goals in

paragraph (b)(1) of this section prior to conducting the community assessment; and,

(ii) For how to use the data acquired to reach goals in paragraph (b)(1) of this section after conducting the community assessment.

(4) When determining what data to acquire under paragraph (b)(2) of this section programs should consider what information is most relevant to inform services for families most in need. Data gathering should be informed by the program's understanding of the community and be intentionally designed to help the program identify community strengths, needs, and resources, and plan the program accordingly. Programs are not required to collect all information themselves; rather programs should utilize community partners and utilize existing available data sources relevant to the local community.

(5) A program must annually review and, where needed, update the community assessment to identify any significant shifts in community demographics, needs, and resources that may impact that program design and service delivery. As described in paragraph (b)(4) of this section, programs should consider results from their self-assessment as required in subpart J of this part (1302.101 through 1302.103) and their annual funding application to inform this process. The annual update review must consider at a minimum: changes related to children and families experiencing homelessness; how the program addresses equity, accessibility, and inclusiveness in its provision of services; and changes including the availability to publicly-funded pre-kindergarten and whether it meets the needs of families. Programs must consider how the annual review and update can inform and support management approaches continuous quality improvement, program goals, and ongoing oversight.

(6) A program must consider whether the characteristics of the community allow it to include children from diverse economic backgrounds that would be supported by other funding sources, including private pay, in addition to the program's eligible funded enrollment. A program must not enroll children from diverse economic backgrounds if it would result in a program serving less than its eligible funded enrollment.

PROCEDURE

1. CSNT conducts a Community Assessment at least once during the five-year grant period.
2. Data from the Community Assessment describes the strengths and needs of the communities that are served by the Program as well as resources available within these communities.
3. Data within the Community Assessment includes:
 - a. The number of eligible children along with their location within the CSNT service area and their race, ethnicity, and language spoken within the home;
 - b. Children and families living in poverty;

- c. Children and families experiencing homelessness per the McKinney-Vento Act;
 - d. The number of children in the Foster Care System;
 - e. Children with disabilities living within the CSNT Program service area and relevant services and resources provided;
 - f. Demographic data covering education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of children and families living within the service area including prevalent challenges and barriers to participation including transportation;
 - g. Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;
 - h. Other child development programs that serve CSNT eligible children within the service area;
 - i. Community resources available including culturally appropriate and responsive supports;
 - j. Strengths of the communities within the Program service area; and,
 - k. Gaps in community resources that support children and families such as housing assistance, health and human services, food assistance, employment assistance, early childhood development, and social services.
4. CSNT reviews and updates the Community Assessment at least annually indicating any significant changes. Data included in the Community Assessment is provided through community data collected from each community including the local school district, state offices and local resources.
 5. CSNT considers the characteristics of the community when developing support services for children and families. The program looks at equity, homelessness, and accessibility when planning what program services would best assist the children and families for the new grant year.
 6. CSNT gathers data on other funding sources within the communities served. This allows CSNT to serve children from diverse economic backgrounds and partner with other funding sources. This data enables CSNT Head Start to stay at or above funded enrollment in the communities served.

DETERMINING, VERIFYING, AND DOCUMENTING ELIGIBILITY. (Standard 1302.12)

(a) Process overview.

(1) Program staff must:

- (i) Conduct and in-person interview with each family unless paragraph (a)(2) of this section applies.**
- (ii) Verify information as required in paragraphs (h) and (i) of this section; and,**

(iii) Create an eligibility determination record for enrolled participants according to paragraph (k) of this section.

(2) Program staff may interview the family over the telephone if an in person interview is not possible or convenient for the family.

(3) If the program has an alternate method to reasonably determine eligibility based on its community assessment, geographic and administrative data, or from other reliable data sources, it may petition the responsible HHS official to waive requirements in paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (ii) of this section.

PROCEDURE

1. Family Empowerment Staff (FS) will complete an in-person interview with parent/guardian when application is returned to the campus.
2. This interview will verify the child's age as well as income verification.
3. During this interview, Family Empowerment Staff can ask further questions regarding a family that may be categorically eligible for the program.
4. If the FES Staff cannot do an in-person interview, a phone interview is allowed. FES Staff must document why an in-person interview was not completed.
5. During a pandemic, interviews will be contacted via virtual platform or phone calls.
6. FES Staff will print Child Plus report 2135, which include the eligibility determination record, and will file this in the students file.

(b) 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. Children must turn one years old before their start date to be eligible for enrollment in Early Head Start.
2. Children are eligible for Early Head Start services until they are able to transition into the Head Start Program upon their third birthday.
3. Children must turn three years old on or before September 1 to be eligible for enrollment at the beginning of any Head Start operational school year. (Children with professionally diagnosed disabilities are eligible for enrollment upon their third birthday).
4. Children who turn three after September 1 will not be eligible for enrollment until the following Head Start school year.
5. Children that are eligible to receive kindergarten services are not eligible for Head Start services.

(c) 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.

(d) Additional allowances for programs.

(1) A program may enroll an additional 35 percent of participants who 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.

(e) Additional allowances for Indian Tribes.

(Does not pertain to CSNT Head Start)

(f) Migrant or Seasonal eligibility requirements.

(Does not pertain to CSNT Head Start)

(g) Eligibility requirements for communities with 1,000 or fewer individuals.

(Does not pertain to CSNT Head Start)

PROCEDURE

1. Ninety percent (90%) of children selected must be from low-income families. Income eligibility guidelines shall be determined by the Income Guidelines published by the Federal Government in accordance with HSPPS. Age eligible children from families who are receiving TANF or SSI will be considered income eligible even if their family income exceeds the Federal income guidelines and are categorically eligible for the Program.
2. Households considered Homeless based on the definition of ♦Homelessness♦ in the McKinney-Vento Act will be considered categorically eligible for the program.
3. A child in foster care is considered income eligible even if the family income exceeds the income guidelines.
4. Once all the available slots have been filled with income eligible children up to 35% of enrollment can be filled with families with 100-130% of poverty guidelines.
5. Up to ten (10%) of the children selected may be from families whose income exceeds the Federal poverty guidelines. Children from over-income families will be enrolled only if all income-eligible children who want services have been enrolled.

(h) 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. Program staff verify age by reviewing the birth certificate or verification of birth facts from a hospital.
2. A family is not required to provide an official birth certificate if it creates a barrier for the family to enroll.

(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 provided to Family Empowerment Advocate s must be within the past three months.
2. Bank statements will not be accepted as proof of income but will be used in figuring the 30% benchmark for housing costs per the total income, when applicable. Other relevant documents can be accepted for figuring housing costs such as utilities bills, house and rent payments, etc.
3. If prior year's tax form is not available, parents must provide: one check stub if paid monthly, two check stubs if paid bi-weekly or semi-monthly, and four check stubs if paid weekly. This will provide for accuracy in income calculations.
4. Staff that has children enrolling in the program will have their income checked by the Family Service Administrator and income will be locked in the Family Service Administrator office.
5. If proof of income is not available, Family Empowerment Advocate will give parents one of three forms to be completed: Third-Party Verification, Self- Declaration, or Zero Income Statement. Staff will fill out these forms stating how the Family Empowerment Advocate verified that the information provided is correct.
6. Income will be calculated on the Income Calculation Worksheet.
7. Families that may be homeless will complete the residency form that is included in the application. Family Empowerment Staff will do an interview with families to verify that the family is homeless, and this will be documented on the Eligibility Determination record.
8. Families that are within the foster care system will provide a legal document that states the child is in the foster care system.
9. Families that are receiving public assistance will provide a statement from either the Health and Human Services office or Social Security office showing that the family receives either TANF, Food Stamps
10. or SSI.

(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 expect 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. Children enrolled in the Head Start Preschool program remain eligible until the end of the second school year with the program.
2. Staff will not recalculate income unless a child withdraws from the program and the families wishes to re-enroll the child.
3. Children transitioning from Early Head Start to Head Start Preschool must reverify their family's eligibility for the program.

(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. Eligibility determination records are kept in the child's file under the income section of the file.
2. The eligibility determination record is printed off Child Plus and includes the required information.
3. The Income Calculation Worksheet is located in the income section of the file and contains the child's income eligibility.
4. All documentation used to verify income will be located in the Child's file behind the income calculation worksheet.
5. Parent and Staff must sign the income verification worksheet. After the parent and staff verify this information the Family Service Administrator will verify correctness and will sign the form as well.
6. All records will be kept on campus for one year after the child's last

day in the program.

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

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. Staff that violates the Performance Standards for verifying eligibility will be considered to be committing fraud.
2. Staff receive training every year on fraud and sign a statement that they have been trained.
3. Personal Policy 701, Conduct and Work Rules, address fraudulent activities and failure to follow State and Federal regulations. Infractions of these rules of conduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

(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. Training is conducted with all new staff within ninety days of hire date regarding the requirements and procedures for the Enrollment, Recruitment, Selection, and Eligibility of children in the program or placed on the waiting list.
2. All Family Empowerment Staff receive training on an annual basis regarding changes to the ERSEA requirements and plans.
3. Governing Board and Policy Council Members receive training regarding changes to the ERSEA requirements and plans within 180 days of each new school term.

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. Family Empowerment Staff locate age and income eligible children in the service area.
2. Family Empowerment Staff distribute posters/flyers at local agencies and businesses.
3. When available, Family Empowerment Staff will advertise in the local newspaper.
4. When available, Family Empowerment Staff will contact ISD to post flyer and round up information on the ISD website/Facebook.
5. Family Empowerment Staff distribute applications to families of currently enrolled children for re-enrollment for the following year.
6. Start conducting Spring Round-up in March.
7. Always accept application on a continuous basis.
8. All recruitment flyers will encourage the enrollment of children with disabilities.
9. Staff will work closely with ECI/other agencies to ensure enrollment of children with disabilities.

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. All applicants will be ranked and awarded points according to the Selection Criteria.
2. Applicants receiving the highest points will be selected to participate in the program.
3. Based on the needs identified in the latest Community Assessment, the following criteria will be given consideration for enrollment:
 - a. Families that are considered homeless (McKinney-Vento Act)
 - b. Households receiving TANF, SSI, or Foster Children.
 - c. Families considered low income.
 - d. Families of children that have attended and/or attending Early Head Start.
 - e. Households that receive assistance (SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, and CCMS)
 - f. Children with a diagnosed disability.
 - g. Children that have siblings currently enrolled in the program.
 - h. Consideration will also be given to families based on Parental Status (guardian, one parent, two parents)
 - i. Returning age appropriate children enrolled in the current year will be automatically eligible to attend the following year.
- (4) Children's applications will be reviewed annually to assure appropriate questions are in place that will indicate the families who have the greatest need for service. Disability Children (Standard 1302.14)
- (5) Children of staff members will be given priority as part of the selection criteria. Every effort will be made to keep children and parents out of the same classroom, if applicable.

(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 services 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. Ten percent of the funded enrollment slots may be used for children with professionally diagnosed disabilities. (Actual enrollment for CSNT Head Start is defined as the total funded enrollment of 465 students and defined as a total of 16 children for Early Head Start. Monthly enrollment can vary from 465 to 479. Occasional over enrollment, due to ISD partnerships, can occur. (Monitoring of enrollment is conducted monthly.)
2. Children with professionally diagnosed or suspected disabilities are granted point on the selection criteria.
3. Disabilities meet the criteria as set forth by IDEA.
4. Recruitment efforts include targeting children with disabilities.
5. If ten percent of funded enrollment slots are not children with disabilities, an application for waiver will be made.

(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. After full enrollment is reached, recruitment efforts will occur on an ongoing basis in accordance with the ERSEA Plan.

2. The Family Empowerment Advocate will receive applications and screen them for completeness. Applications will be considered complete when the basic application is received, family income has been documented and verified, age verification, and a copy of the child's enrollment verification is received. Assistance will be provided to any family that needs help in completing the application forms.
3. Applications will be available both online and in hard copy and are available in both Spanish and English.
4. Families who have submitted incomplete applications will receive notification. Children will not be placed on waiting list until the application is complete.
5. Waiting list is calculated and kept in Child Plus.

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 130.72 (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

- (1)** CSNT ensures that full enrollment is kept through the school year.
- (2)** If a vacancy occurs, the program will replace the slot within 30 calendar days.
- (3)** Family Empowerment Staff makes every effort to ensure that eligible enrolled children return the following school year.
- (4)** To ensure stability, homeless and foster children can continue to receive services at the Campus where they are enrolled if they move out of the service area and are still able to attend the program.
- (5)** If the Community Assessment shows a need to reserve slots for homeless and foster children, the agency will reserve no more than 3% of the enrollment slots. If these slots are not filled within 30 days, this slot will be considered a vacancy and Family Empowerment Staff will fill the slot within 30 days.
- (6)** CSNT will follow the state immunization enrollment and attendance requirements policy.
- (7)** No parent is required to participate in any program activity as a condition of their child's 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. If parent has not contacted the program within one hour of start time, a phone call will be made by Family Empowerment Advocate to ensure the safety of the child.
2. If absenteeism continues a home visit will be made.
3. A note from the parent or doctor/dentist should be provided on the child's return to school and will excuse a child's absence.
4. The following are acceptable reasons for excused absences:
 - a. A child is hospitalized.
 - b. A child is incapacitated due to serious injury.
 - c. A child contracts a communicable disease (virus or flu, etc.)
 - d. A child has other health related ailments which temporarily prevent attendance such as asthma.
 - e. There is a death in the family.
 - f. A child cannot attend class because he/she has received a

medical treatment or therapy at the time school was being held.

- g. The child's attendance is affected by a family situation.
 - h. Weather conditions.
 - i. Transportation, water and heater problems may necessitate closing the campus.
- 5. Family Empowerment Staff look at individual attendance data within the first 60 days of school to identify children that are at risk of missing more than ten percent of the year.
 - 6. Family Service Administrator attends the first parent meeting of the year at each campus and stress the importance of attendance to the parents.
 - 7. Family Empowerment Staff work with the family and encourage regular attendance. If a situation prevents child from attending the program, Family Empowerment Staff should use available resources to help the family reengage in the program.
 - 8. If child does not reengage in the program, this slot is considered an enrollment vacancy.
 - 9. If a home visit is made with the family, the discussion centers on the reasons for the absence and any assistance program can provide the family to encourage regular attendance and the importance to the child and the program for the child to attend regularly.

(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. If attendance falls below 85%, Administrative staff will use data to analyze issues that have contributed to the absentee rate.
- 2. Necessary changes will be made if issue is identified.

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

- 1. If a program determines a child is eligible under 1032.12(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. Homeless children will be allowed to enroll and attend the program without an immunization record for up to 30 days (Texas State law). Family Empowerment Advocate s will work with the family to obtain a copy of the shot record as quickly as possible.
2. If homeless children cannot regularly attend due to transportation, Family Empowerment Staff will work with community resources, when available, to provide transportation for the child.

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 services plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP), consulting with the responsible agency to ensure the child receives the needed support services.**

PROCEDURE

1. CSNT does not use suspension due to a child's behavior. If a child has demonstrated extreme behavior issues in the classroom the program will implement the following:
 - a. Teacher will document the behavior in writing dates, times, and a brief description of the behavior(s)
 - b. Management staff/Education Coordinator/Consultants will observe the classroom and document in writing dates, times, and a brief narrative of the behavior(s).
 - c. If data indicates, the parent/guardian will be notified to attend a meeting to discuss the behavior with appropriate staff/specialist/consultants in attendance (child may be referred to Local Education Agency where the child may receive services under IDEA, if appropriate)
 - d. If data indicates, a Behavior Modification Plan will be implemented with guidance from parents/staff/specialist/consultants
 - e. If data indicates, a Behavior Modification Plan may modify the amount of time a child remains in the classroom during the school day (the plan will be analyzed on a regular basis so the child can return to a regular classroom schedule as quickly as possible)

(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. CSNT does not use expel or unenroll a child from the Program based solely on a child's behavior. If a child exhibits persistent or serious challenging behavior issues in the classroom the program will implement the following:
 - a. Engage the support of the parent/guardian
 - b. Engage the support of the classroom staff
 - c. Engage the participation/support of mental health consultants
 - d. Engage the participation/support of IDEA/504 Rehabilitation Services through the Local Education Agency

(CSNT Head Start will implement and follow all IEPs and IFSPs as written)

e. If data indicates, the Program is not the most appropriate placement for the child, in consultation with the parent/guardian, the Program will assist in transitioning the child to a more appropriate placement.

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

1. CSNT does not charge fees for service.