

Finding the Keys to ERSEA

Eligibility,
Recruitment,
Selection,
Enrollment, and
Atendance



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The Master Key and the Custom Fit Key

The Head Start parent/family is our customer and partner. We know that it takes the right key to motivate, inspire and unlock the door to successful partnerships. The same is true for staff as we try to understand regulations, rules, and sometimes “Head Start folklore.”

Finding the Keys to ERSEA is designed to unlock the mystery and open up new doors that can lead to better practices grounded in regulation. It is essential that staff have access to accurate and easily readable information, so we’ve designed this document around specific keys for success. One of the difficulties in the area of Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance (ERSEA) is that there are many keys (regulations) that govern our approach to the topic. Each of you will need to read and study all relevant federal regulations, state regulations and local programs plans, policies and procedures. Finding the Keys to ERSEA, will provide some questions and answers for you, remember, some questions will have more than one answer.

Finding the Keys to ERSEA is organized according to each ERSEA section - Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance. The first section of each key provides you with thoughts that should be considered in the management of your program. The last section of each key contains a brief discussion of key documents needed to effectively implement the area.

A **Master Key** is the one everybody wants because it opens all the doors. The objective of the Master Key is to establish cohesive management systems that support continuous improvement and foster commitment to providing the highest level of services to children and families. The Master Key is connected and interrelated with all program services.

A **Custom-fit key** takes time and skill to cut. It is specially designed to fit only one individual lock or set of locks. The Community Assessment is such a custom-fit key that is cut to match the analysis of the services, supports, strengths, and resources in a specified community. Every community is different, so the Community wide strategic planning and needs assessment (community assessment) cannot be duplicated from one to another.

According to Subpart A – Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance - 1302.11(b):

(1) A program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. The community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources and include, at a minimum:

- (i) The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including:





Eligibility

Keys to Determining Eligibility

1302.12 Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility.

(a) Process overview.

(1) Program staff must:

- (i) Conduct an in-person interview with each family.
- (ii) Verify information – age, income
- (iii) Create an eligibility determination record for each enrolled participant.

(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 a 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 the requirements to conduct an in person interview, verification of age according to program policies, and verification of income in the usual sense.

I. Basic Eligibility Requirements Are Age and Income

1302.12 (c) Eligibility requirements

(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 a program's enrollment.

II. Determining Age

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

by reviewing documents such as birth certificates, hospital records, medical cards, baptismal certificates, passports, etc.

1302.12 (b) Age requirements

(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.

Note* Transitioning children from Early Head Start to Head Start - within the same program - to ensure the most appropriate placement and services following participation in Early Head Start, transition planning must be undertaken for each child and family at least six months prior to the child's third birthday. The process must take into account:

1. The child's health status and developmental level,
2. Progress made by the child and family while in Early Head Start,
3. Current and changing family circumstances, and
4. The availability of Head Start and other child development or child care services in the community.

As appropriate, a child may remain in Early Head Start, following his or her third birthday, for additional months until he or she can transition into Head Start or another program.

1302.12 (b)

(2) Age Requirements for Head Start

(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.

III. Determining Family Size

Correctly determining family size is an important step in the eligibility process.

1305.2 – Terms

Family for a child, means all persons living in the same household who are:

- (1) Supported by the child's parent(s)' or guardian(s)' income; and
- (2) Related to the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) by blood, marriage, or adoption; or
- (3) The child's authorized caregiver or legally responsible party.

For the purposes of eligibility based on family income, the pregnant woman is counted as two members of the family.