

PASSAIC FAMILY HEAD START, INC.

ERSEA

ELIGIBILITY, RECRUITMENT, SELECTION ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Maintaining enrollment consists of five phases: eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance.

PERFORMANCE STANDARD

1302.10 – 1302.18 Subpart A – Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance.

I. ELIGIBILITY

1302.12 Determining, verifying and documenting eligibility

Purpose: 1302.12

Passaic Family Head Start accepts children according to Federal age/income eligibility criteria.

Applications are available and accepted at all times during the year through the Head Start Social Services staff.

A. Basic Eligibility

Prior to being given an application, the following basic information is ascertained in order to establish basic eligibility for program services:

1. the child must be either three or four years old by October 31st, which is the date the local public schools use to determine eligibility for kindergarten;
2. the child must reside within the City of Passaic; and
3. the family income must be within the current Head Start income guidelines ([see section III](#))
4. Exceptions to the above process:
The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) enables programs to serve families above the poverty level (45 CFR §1302.12):
 - Programs may offer 10% of funded enrollment slots to children from over-income families who could benefit from Head Start services.
 - Under certain circumstances, programs can fill up to 35% of enrollment with children from families with incomes between 100 and 130% of poverty.

If the program has not met its funded enrollment it will provide families with income up to 130 % of poverty and will consider 10% of families above that level.

B. Verifying Eligibility

To When determining income from pay stubs, the program will use gross income (before taxes and deductions), not net income, in accordance with Head Start requirements.

When tax documentation is provided, the program will review total income from all sources. Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), as indicated on line 11 of IRS Form 1040, may be used as a reference point when applicable. The program may request additional documentation to ensure that all income is accurately captured and that eligibility determinations are consistent with Head Start regulations.

C. Application Process

Parents complete the general information section of the application on their own, and then review it with a member of the Social Service staff, who shall do the following:

1. ensure that the form is complete and that all information is legible, assisting the parent as needed;
2. complete the income verification section with the parent, immediately; The parent will be told instantly of income eligibility. If not eligible they will be told as such and offered to go on the over income list. They will also be encouraged to apply to other available centers including the school district that does not have income limitations.
(SEE PURPOSE 645(a)(1)(8)(iii)(II) LISTED BELOW)
3. verify that he/she has seen documentation of family income by signing the income verification section;
(SEE PURPOSE 1302.13 LISTED BELOW)
4. obtain a copy of the income verified
5. Describe efforts made to verify eligibility
6. obtain other information to be used in the consideration of the applicant for services, such as referrals from any agencies involved in the family or documentation of a child's need for special services; homelessness, foster care, income is below income guidelines, family is eligible for public assistance.

Purpose: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The Passaic Family Head Start Program will provide homeless families with enrollment opportunities, even when a family does not have the documentation usually required for enrollment, such as proof of guardianship, a birth certificate, immunization, or other health records, and proof of residence.

Purpose: 645(a)(1)(8)(iii)(II)

Over income children will be placed on the waiting list following any income-eligible children, and considered only if no income-eligible children are already on the waiting list. Over income families that fall within 101% - 130% of the poverty guideline will be prioritized ahead of families who fall within 131%-250% of the poverty guideline.

D. Completing the Application Process

1. assign eligibility points to the application: and
2. date the application when the above are accomplished.

Dating the application properly is important, as applicants within a given priority are selected on this basis.

Only completed applications are forwarded to the Social Service Manager for the charting process. Incomplete applications will be followed up by Social Service Staff.

II. RECRUITMENT

1302.11 Determining Community Strengths, Needs & Resources

1302.13 Recruitment of Children

Purpose: 1302.13

Passaic Family Head Start actively recruits eligible children and families within the Passaic Family Head Start service area. PFHS will develop a recruitment plan each year to systematically identify families whose children may be eligible for Head Start services, inform them of services, and encourage them to apply for enrollment into the program.

Purpose: 1302.13

Passaic Family Head Start will ensure that the children and families with the greatest need are accepted for enrollment.

A. General Recruitment Procedures

The recruitment of children is an ongoing process throughout the program year. The following steps are taken to ensure that children most needing the program are enrolled.

1. Service Area
1302.11 a (1) “A program must propose a service area in the grant application and define the area by county or sub county area, such as municipality, town or census tract....”

The prescribed service area as defined in the grant application is the City of Passaic within Passaic County.

2. Community Wide Strategic Planning

1302.11 b (1) “To design a program that meets community needs and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment once over the 5 year grant period....”

The Community Needs assessment will be reviewed and revised as needed with statistical information stating community needs, changes, strengths and resources. This will include data regarding the number of eligible preschool children served and those needing services. The number of eligible infants, toddlers and expectant mothers will be documented as well.

3. Community Education & Outreach: Each Spring, letters of intent are sent to agencies within the community describing the Head Start program, including the number of children served, and a description of the program. We emphasize that we work cooperatively with agencies and we solicit referrals for the program. The Education/Disability Manager contacts those agencies dealing specifically with handicapped children and their families. The Community Needs Assessment, conducted by the Director with the input of Managers, determines the target areas for recruitment within the City of Passaic.
4. The Family Partnership staff will make a list of the eligible returning children. Letters are sent home to their parents to sign and return if they are interested in their child returning for the coming program year.
5. We solicit the help of past and current parents, community businesses in addition to the entire staff. We utilize all forms of communication to facilitate efforts.
6. Recruitment Materials are completed and recruitment effort is a program wide responsibility which includes;
 - a. Posters placed in schools, agencies, and commercial establishments;
 - b. Leaflets sent home
 - c. Agency visits or telephone contacts.
 - d.

The overall goal of the recruitment process is to obtain a sufficient number of eligible applicants in order to fill all anticipated openings in a timely manner. For planning purposes, this number shall be the total funded enrollment for the upcoming program year.

If this figure is not reached by May 31st, door to door recruitment shall be done until this total is reached.

In order to try to achieve an enrollment that closely reflects the makeup of the community, our recruitment efforts must assure that every eligible segment of the Target Areas is reached. To this end, door to door Recruitment Teams will reflect the makeup of the community in order to demonstrate that the program represents all eligible families. Recruitment teams consist of Social Service staff.

B. Recruitment Procedures for Children, including those with Disabilities

The procedure for recruiting children with disabilities is the same as for all children in Head Start. We will ensure at least 10% of the actual enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act((IDEA). It is ongoing through the year but heavily stressed during the months of March through June.

The following agencies and community groups are used as additional resources for recruitment of children with disabilities:

1. Passaic Mental Health Clinic,
2. IDA Gurtman Therapeutic Children's Program
3. Passaic Board of Education
4. *Passaic County Elks Cerebral Palsy Treatment Center,*
5. Passaic-Clifton Dept. of Children Protection & Permanency
6. List of local hospitals including St. Joseph's
7. *Special Child Health Service,*
8. Early Intervention Programs.
9. Passaic County Services
10. *Hackensack Institute for Child Development*
11. *Northeast Regional Early Intervention*
12. *Catholic Families & Community Services*
13. WIC Center of Passaic
14. Mental Health Association of Passaic County
15. *William Paterson University-Speech & Hearing Clinic*
16. Four C's
17. DCC&P Program
18. Passaic City

The Education Manager, Social Service Manager and Special Services Manager will work together to obtain information on children with disabilities and "at risk" children in an effort to gather as much information as possible before the charting/selection process takes place. Such information may include evaluations (speech, neurological, developmental, psychological, psychiatric, physical, etc.) and family background.

No information is requested or shared without the written, informed consent of the parent or legal guardian*.

*"Informed Consent" means that parents or legal guardians have had access to all information found in records being sent to Head Start, that they have signed a release form giving permission for this information to be shared, and they understand the reason for the information being requested.

III. THE SELECTION PROCESS
1302.14 Selection Process

Purpose: 1302.14

Effective October 21, 2024 Passaic Family Head Start has implemented a change of eligibility/selection criteria to align with the current head start standards.

In prioritizing the selection of children to be served, Passaic Family Head Start established an eligibility criteria that ensures children from families with the greatest need receive the most services. The following criteria was established based on the results of the most recent community needs assessment to gain an understanding of the prioritization needed for the selection of participants. [1302.11 (b)] [1302.14 (d)]

Priorities for our eligibility criteria include but are not limited to income, foster care, homelessness, public assistance, and disabilities. As well as age, specifically prioritizing pre-k three students [1302.14 (a) (4)], along with the enrollment of eligible children of staff members [1302.14 (a) (6)]. A points-based system was implemented, prioritizing children from families with the highest scores, as they are deemed to be the most in need compared to those families with fewer points. In terms of prioritizing families income, students whose families income are at a lower percentage receive more points than students whose families income are at a higher percentage. In addition to income requirements, an adjustment may be made to a family’s income calculation for the purpose of determining eligibility by accounting for excessive housing costs that exceed more than thirty percent of their total gross income. [1302.15 (i) (1)]

At the beginning of each enrollment year a waiting list is established and maintained throughout the program year to rank eligible children according to our program’s selection criteria. [1302.14 (c)] Any available slot will be filled by determining who is most in need for our program using the point system created, and moved to our enrolled list. The criteria will be reviewed annually to ensure it aligns with the results of the community needs assessment, allowing our agency to continue servicing the community effectively.

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IV. THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS
1302.15 Enrollment

Purpose: 1302.15

Passaic Family Head Start will ensure that the children and families with the greatest need are accepted for enrollment.

Purpose: 1302.15 (b) (3)

If a child has been found income eligible and has participated in Passaic Family Head Start, he or she remains income eligible through the enrollment year and the immediately succeeding program year provided that family income is verified again.

Purpose: 1302.15

The Passaic Family Head Start Program must meet and maintain funded enrollment during the program year. Children are enrolled into PFHS from waiting lists which rank children according to points assigned from the established selection criteria.

A. Social Services

Once the initial selection process has taken place, the selected applications are reviewed by the Social Service staff in order to make appointments for intake interviews. The interviews are scheduled in a manner taking into account the following factors:

1. The time and date are most convenient for the family.
2. Other pertinent factors such as availability of bilingual staff and staff schedules in general.
3. The need to achieve funded enrollment.

All selected children's parents receive an "Acceptance Letter" which indicates the date, time, and place that the intake will occur. This letter also requests that parents bring certain information required to do the actual intake. Intake interviews are conducted at the Head Start Center in a private area to preserve confidentiality. Since many of our families are Spanish speakers, the bilingual family workers are available to conduct their intakes. The following forms are completed during the intake:

1. Release of Children (DCPP)
2. Permission To Take Child Form
3. Information to Parents Form (N.J. State DCPP requirement),
4. Parental Consent for Trips
5. Emergency Contact Verification Form
6. Family Needs Assessment
7. Westinghouse Child Health Record
8. Emergency Medical Form
9. Consent for Dental,
10. Consent Form for Hearing and Speech,
11. Consent Form for St. Mary's Hospital
12. Media Release
13. Handbook (receipt)
14. Expulsion Policy
15. Registration form and
16. Family Agreement.

B. Health Intake

A Health Intake and review of all Health related documents is completed on the same day as the Social Service intake is completed.

C. Disabilities Services

Additional information may be needed by the Disabilities Services Component, including IEP's, IFSP Plan, referrals to child study team and any other pertinent information in order to provide services to children.

D. Procedure for Classroom Placement

Once all required Social Services, Health and Special Services information is obtained, the child is considered to be enrolled and ready for his/her first day of school.

Except for children selected during the school year to fill specific classroom vacancies, facility site and classroom assignment is made by the Social Service Manager and the Education manager, taking into consideration the following factors:

1. Proximity of Child's address to the school site
2. Child's age, sex, ethnic background and native language;
3. Child's disability

These factors must be taken into consideration to guarantee that the family's needs are met whenever possible, the Head Start classrooms are

reflective of the community in general, and no one teaching team has a preponderance of children with disabilities.

Once the classroom assignments are made, the Education Manager gives the information to the teaching teams, who shall notify the families of each child assigned to their classroom of their placement and the child's first day of school.

For children enrolled after the beginning of the school year, the Social Service staff shall notify the parents of their child's classroom assignment.

V. ATTENDANCE, ENROLLMENT AND RECORD KEEPING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1302.15 Enrollment, 1302.15 Attendances

A. Enrollment

Purpose: 1302.15

The Passaic Family Head Start Program **will annually review its enrollment process to ensure it is user-friendly and efficient. To streamline the process, PFHS has created a bar code for applicants to apply online.** PFHS must meet and maintain funded enrollment during the program year. Children are enrolled into PFHS from waiting lists which rank children according to points assigned from the established selection criteria.

It is the goal of the Social Service Component to fully enroll the required number of children (funded enrollment) by no later than September 1st. The first day of enrollment is the first day a child is in attendance physically in a class.

Vacancies are filled within 30 calendar days through the use and maintenance of a waiting list. If a child is dropped it is the Social Service staff's responsibility to fill the vacancy within no more than 30 days, however, the maintenance of the waiting list generally allows for slots to be filled within 2 weeks.

B. Attendance

Purpose:

All families are encouraged to maintain regular attendance in Head Start and Early Head Start activities. Head Start and Early Head Start staff will support families in identifying barriers to regular attendance and will initiate support as appropriate. If families are not able or willing to participate, another child will be given the opportunity to attend the program.

Purpose:

To ensure that children receive the maximum benefit of learning opportunities provided by the Head Start center-based program option.

Purpose:

Attendance allows the program to monitor and to follow up on absences of children to ensure they are well and or safe.

Attendance is taken and monitored daily. The Teacher, Family Worker and Receptionist all take attendance daily.

Absences are immediately noted and if consecutive days or a pattern is noticed the parent is contacted.

In cases of illness the Family Worker may request a note from a doctor in order for the child to return to school.

The program stresses the importance of regular attendance throughout the year, beginning with the intake of each family. The record keeping procedures, described in detail below, ensure that early and consistent contacts are made with families whose children attend irregularly.

It is the philosophy of the Passaic Family Head Start program that every attempt shall be made to assist the family in its effort to send the child to the program on a regular basis, barring illness and other appropriate reasons for absence.

It is of the highest priority, then, that the children remain in the program and that support services are provided whenever possible to keep the child in the program if attendance irregularity occurs. These services may be direct counseling, meetings with family workers, and or referrals.

There are, however, situations where the child's continuance in the program is unfeasible. Once all outreach efforts have been provided and there is no positive response from the family, a letter, indicating that if the absent period continues the child's slot shall be considered vacant, is sent.

Complete documentation of the outreach efforts, and the results of such efforts of the Education and the Social Service staff, shall be maintained in the child's file.

C. Record Keeping

Purpose;

The Passaic Family Head Start Program keeps track of absenteeism in order to ensure maximum benefits to children.

Center Attendance Policy- In order for parents and children to gain the greatest benefit from program participation, it is necessary for children to attend regularly and for school to be a part of a child's normal routine. Ten consecutive days of unexcused absences or eighteen days per school may result in the child being dropped from the program.

Head Start is responsible for keeping accurate attendance records for all enrolled children throughout the program year. The following procedures are used to monitor attendance and to follow up on absent children.

1. Classroom teachers maintain monthly "Attendance Records," and a daily attendance sheet is completed by the teacher. These forms indicate absences and, whenever known, both individual children's reasons for absence and overall problems affecting attendance, such as inclement weather. All staff receiving calls from families about absences must make sure that they give this information to the teachers and Social Service staff so it can be recorded in the child's file.
 - a. If the classroom teacher contacts the family, the teacher will note the attempted contacts on the Parent Contact Form and forward the form to the Family Worker assigned to the family. The Family Worker will attempt to contact the family by phone, or conduct a home visit to determine the cause for the child's absenteeism.
 - b. If the FAMILY WORKER is unable to locate the family and there are 10 days of unexcused absences, the child may be withdrawn from the program. The FAMILY WORKER will report all findings to the Social Services Manager. The Social Services Manager will send a certified letter to the child's family informing them of the program's attendance policy and notifying the family of the possible withdrawal. If absenteeism continues after receipt of the certified letter, a meeting with the Program Director will be required.
 - c. If there is no response from the family, the child's slot is considered an enrollment vacancy.
 - d. Each student with chronic absences, less than 85% attendance, will receive communication by phone or mail notifying the family of the benefits of regular attendance and encourage the family to bring the child every day. The staff will document all communication efforts in the child's comprehensive file.
 - e. If the child's attendance does not improve, and there is no illness or documented reason for absence, the Program Director may (with input from the management staff) place the child back on the waitlist and fill the child's classroom slot with the next eligible child.
2. The teaching staff reviews the attendance sheet daily to determine which child's attendance must be followed up on. This would include children who have been out three consecutive days, children whose attendance is consistently irregular, and children who have been absent for unknown reasons.

This information is then forwarded to the Social Service staff for follow-up. Follow-up consists of either direct contact (in person or by phone) or in-direct contact (letters), depending on the nature of each individual case. Serious or consistent attendance irregularity calls for direct contact, while occasional absences may not.

If the absenteeism is attributed to illness the Social Service staff will conduct the follow up accordingly.

Follow up consists of providing any assistance within our capacity to help the parent get the child to school regularly, and of reminding parents of the importance of regular attendance.

3. At the end of each month the Social Service Manager staff reviews attendance figures and forwards them to the USDA Agency Monitor, Secretary and the Director, all who check attendance. All classroom Attendance Records are sent.

4. **ABSENCE POLICY**

Excused Absences:

- Illness (enrolled child/parent/guardian)
- Quarantine (enrolled child or household member)
- Dental, Medical, Health or Therapy Appointment (enrolled child/parent/guardian)
- Family Emergency (death of any family member, funeral of family member, car accident of parent/guardian, court appearance of parent/guardian)
- Court-ordered visitation with absent parent(s) (Court order required)
- Dangerous weather conditions (i.e. power lines down, flash floods, fires, high winds) that prevent family from getting to center
- Transportation emergency (Limit to six times per year with Director's signature)

D. Fees

1302.18 Fees

Purpose: 1302.18

In accordance with 45 CFR 1302.18 the Passaic Family Head Start Program does not prescribe any fee schedule or otherwise provide for the charging of any fees for participation in program services. However, Passaic Family Head Start will prescribe allowable fees in accordance with 1302.18 (b).

It is the policy of Passaic Family Head Start that Head Start funded children are not charged any fees to participate.

The Passaic Family Head Start, Inc. does not have extended hours at this time. If it ever does, it may consider charging for that portion of the day that is not provided by Head Start.

The Passaic Family Head Start, Inc. does not serve children from diverse economic backgrounds at this time. If in the future the program decides to serve children of economically diverse backgrounds it may charge fees to those families that are above the Head Start Income Eligibility guidelines.

DEFINITIONS

Purpose: HSPPS 1305

In accordance with 45 CFR 1305, Passaic Family Head Start staff recognizes that the following terms are defined by the Office of Head Start as they relate to ERSEA (Eligibility-Recruitment-Selection-Enrollment-Attendance) policies and procedures for placement of children for program services.

1. The following terms are defined as they relate to ERSEA:

Children with disabilities means children with mental retardation, hearing impairments including deafness, speech or language impairment, visual impairments including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities who, by reason thereof, need special education and related services. The term "children with disabilities" for children aged 3 to 5, inclusive, may, at a State's discretion, include children experiencing developmental delays, as defined by the State, and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas; physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development; and who, by reason thereof, need special education and related services. (Children with disabilities **MUST** have an IEP or IFSP to be counted in the number of disabled children served by the program).

Enrolled (or any variation of) means a child has been accepted and attended at least one class for center-based or family child care option or at least one home visit for the home based option (HSPPS 1305).

Enrollment means the official acceptance of a family by a Head Start program and the completion of all procedures necessary for a child and family to begin receiving services. This is defined in the HSPPS as the period of time, not to exceed twelve months, during which a Head Start program provides center or home based services to a group of children and their families (1305).

Enrollment opportunities mean vacancies that exist at the beginning of the enrollment year, or during the program year because of children who leave the program that must be filled for a program to achieve and maintain its funded enrollment (filled within 30 days).

Enrollment year means the period of time, not to exceed twelve months, during which a Head Start program provides center or home-based services to a group of children and their families.

Excused Absence means a child has a medical excuse written and signed by a licensed physician from the State of New Jersey. The excused absence will be required anytime a child is out for three or more consecutive days. The medical excuse must be for a medical reason that does not permit the child to attend school. These are generally for a few days in duration. Doctor's notes requiring a Long term excused absence will be evaluated on a case by case basis. Notes from a doctor outside of the United States are not acceptable.

Family means all persons living in the same household who are:

1. Supported by the income of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child enrolling in or participating in the program
2. Related to the parent(s) or guardian(s) by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Funded enrollment means the number of children which the Head Start grantee is to serve, as indicated on the grant award. (The LCHS Head Start' funded enrollment is 201 children. LCEHS is funded to serve 80 infants, toddlers and pregnant women.

Head Start eligible means a child that meets the requirements for age and family income as established in program and federal guidelines that meet the requirements of section 645(a) (2) of the Head Start Act. Up to 10% of the children enrolled may be from families that exceed the low-income guidelines.

Head Start program means a Head Start grantee or its delegate agency(ies).

Income means gross cash income and includes earned income, military income (including pay and allowances), veteran's benefits, Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and public assistance benefits additional examples of gross incomes are listed in the definition of "income" which appears in U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports.

Homeless children means the same as homeless children and youths in Section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act at 42 U.S.C. 11434a (2). (HSPPS1305).

Home visitor means the staff member in the home-based program option assigned to work with parents to provide comprehensive services to children and their families through home visits and group socialization activities. (HSPPS 1305)

Income means gross cash income and includes earned income, military income (including pay and allowances, except those described in Section 645(a)(3)(B) of the Act), veteran's benefits, Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and public assistance benefits. Additional examples of gross cash income are listed in the definition of "income" which appears in U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population

Reports, Series P-60-185 (available at <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/popscan/p60-185.pdf>). (HSPPS 1305)

Income guidelines means the official poverty line specified in section 652 of the Head Start Act.

Long term excused absence means a temporary disability preventing mobility and or a disease or virus that places the child or others at risk for a period longer than 10 days. The note must have the name of the child with the diagnosis, recommended treatment and length of time the child is restricted from school attendance. Notes from a doctor outside of the United States are not acceptable.

Low income family means a family whose total annual income before taxes is equal to, or less than, the income guidelines. For the purpose of eligibility, a child from a family that is receiving public assistance or a child in foster care is eligible even when the family income exceeds the income guidelines.

Migrant family means, for purposes of Head Start eligibility, a family with children under the age of compulsory school attendance, who changed their residence by moving from one geographic location to another, either intrastate or interstate, within the preceding two years for the purpose of engaging in agricultural work and whose family income comes primarily from this activity. (HSPPS 1305)

Parent means a Head Start child's mother or father, other family member who is a primary caregiver, foster parent or authorized caregiver, guardian or the person with whom the child has been placed for purposes of adoption pending a final adoption decree. (HSPPS 1305)

Recruitment area means that geographic locality within which a Head Start program seeks to enroll Head Start children and families. The recruitment area can be the same as the service area or it can be a smaller area within the service area. (HSPPS 1305)

Responsible HHS official means the official of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services who has authority to make grants under the Act. (HSPPS 1305)

Selection means the systematic process used to review all applications for head start services and to identify those children and families that are to be enrolled in the program.

Service area means the geographic area identified in an approved grant application within which a grantee may provide Head start services. (The Passaic Family Head Start Service Area includes the following area: City of Passaic).

Vacancy means an unfilled enrollment opportunity for a child and family in the Head Start program. (An enrollment opportunity that has gone 31+ days unfilled).

Revised and approved 3/2024

REVISED September 19 2024

Lewie Soaivan
Board President

Revised 3/2025