



**COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO**  
**PRESCHOOL SERVICES**  
**DEPARTMENT**

**NO. 01 ERSEA ISSUE 4**

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**EFFECTIVE: 04-01-15**  
Updated

**POLICY**

**SUBJECT:**

**HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START CATEGORICAL  
ELIGIBILITY**

**APPROVED: 04-01-15**

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**BY: Diana Alexander, Director**

**PURPOSE**

To establish participation in the Head Start and Early Head Start Programs.

**POLICY**

Preschool Services Department (PSD) staff will document that all families in the designated recruitment area are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services. PSD staff will ensure that the neediest families in the designated service area are ranked and selected for enrollment in the Head Start and Early Head Start Program in accordance with established eligibility criteria.

**REFERENCE**

Head Start Performance Standards 1305.4 (A-E); Head Start Act 645(a)(1)(C); Head Start Act 645 (a)(3)(A).

**PROCEDURE**

For families requesting Head Start and/or Early Head Start services, the Program Generalist and site staff will:

- Interview the family in person.
  - Program staff will interview the family over the telephone if an in- person interview is not possible (i.e. family transportation issue, illness, family emergency, incapacitated parent, etc.).
- Provide information regarding Head Start and/or Early Head Start services and make accommodations to communicate with families according to their cultural and linguistic background.
- Not turn away any family requesting to apply for services.

**Age Eligibility**

For Head Start, a child must:

1. Be at least three years old (See Selection Criteria Policy); or,
2. 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,
3. Not be older than compulsory school age (between 6 – 18 years of age in

California)

4. Not be age eligible for kindergarten if offered in the local community.

For Early Head Start, a child must be an infant or a toddler younger than three years old. A pregnant woman may be any age.

### **Verification of Age Eligibility**

The following are examples of documents that may be used to verify the age:

- Birth Certificate
- Baptismal Certificate
- Medi-Cal Card
- U.S. or International Passport
- Certificate of Live Birth
- Proof of Pregnancy (for pregnant women)

If the family is unable to provide any of the above documents, consult with the Program Supervisor for alternative methods/documents to verify age.

### **Family Income Eligibility**

A pregnant woman or a child is eligible, if:

1. The family's income is equal to or below the poverty level; or,
2. The family is eligible or, in the absence of child care, would be potentially eligible for public assistance. Public assistance includes:
  - a. CalWORKs/TANF
  - b. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

At least 90 percent of the children who are enrolled in the Head Start/Early Head Start program must be from low-income families. Low income is defined as a family whose total annual income before taxes is equal to, or less than, the federal poverty guidelines.

### **Verification of Income Eligibility**

The family must provide the following for the relevant time period (one of the following):

- All W-2 forms,
- pay stubs, or
- pay envelopes
- Notice of Action (TANF)
- SSI Letter

Program Generalist must use all family income for the relevant time period to complete the income worksheet and the PSD Head Start Eligibility Verification Form.

*If* the family cannot provide all W-2 forms, pay stubs, or pay envelopes for the relevant time period, the Program Generalist may accept an Employer Income Statement Form

for the relevant time period and use information provided to calculate total annual income.

**If** the family reports **no income** for the relevant time period, the Program Generalist may:

1. Accept the family's signed declaration, if the Program Generalist:
  - a. Describes efforts made to verify the family's income on the bottom of the PSD Head Start Eligibility Verification Form; and,
  - b. Explains how the family's total income was calculated; **or**,
2. Seek information from third parties about the family's eligibility, **if** the family gives written consent by signing the Head Start-Early Head Start Third Party Consent form.

### **Categorical Eligibility**

The following are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services, even if the family's income exceeds the income guidelines:

- Homeless families
- Children in foster care

### **Income/Categorical Eligibility Documentation**

The Program Generalist/Staff will ask the parent(s) or guardian(s) for the following documents to determine eligibility for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs:

- Proof of child is in foster care
- Statement from homeless services provider / Self declaration

**Note:** All income for Head Start/Early Head Start families is to be calculated and entered into COPA as annual income (select "YEARLY" from the drop down menu). Do not input income for families that are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. The appropriate categorical eligibility must be selected in COPA.

### **Eligibility Certification and Document Management**

The Program Generalist certifies the eligibility of the family by completing the following:

- Certification section on the back of the Head Start/Early Head Start application
- PSD Head Start Eligibility Verification Form
- Family Income Worksheet (if applicable)

The Program Supervisor approves the child for enrollment once all applicable documents are reviewed and verified by the program supervisor.

Copies of all eligibility documents, including income verification, will be filed in the child's file.