

**Blair County Head Start**  
**Eligibility and Selection Criteria**  
~~2017-18~~ **2018-2019**

**Blair County Head Start serves families in Blair County.**

**Program options offered by Blair County Head Start may include:**

- 3 ½ hour classes
- 4.5 hour classes
- 6 hour classes
- 6 hour classes/5days a week

**I. Determining Eligibility:**

- a. FCP staff will be trained on the Eligibility Selection Criteria annually.
- b. New FCP Staff will be trained on determining Eligibility within 90 day of date of hire.
- c. FCP staff will have a face-to-face interview with all parents/guardians at the convenience of the family to determine eligibility for the program via:
  - Home visit
  - On-site Registration
  - Center visit
  - Or at a location agreed upon by the Parent/Guardian and Head Start staff member
- d. For the completion of the Eligibility Verification Home Visit/Meeting, FCP Staff **using the online application process on ChildPlus** will:
  - ~~Verify age and sign birth date verification (BDV) area of application and complete Verification form~~
  - ~~Examine and verify income, sign ICV area of application and complete Eligibility Check off form~~
  - **Review Application Tab on ChildPlus**
  - **Complete the Income Work Sheet, both parent and staff sign and date form (electronically)**
  - **Review Health History (hard copy)**
  - Complete necessary Release of Information forms
  - Make referrals as appropriate
  - **Complete and score Selection Interview tab \*with the exception of “IEP” and “other” area (if applicable). This area will be scored by ERSEA specialist(s) or Family and Community Partnership Manager.**

## II. Determining Eligibility: Categorically/Income

### a. Categorically Eligible

Families who are Homeless (as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act) or a child (ren) in Foster Care (with proper documentation) are eligible for the program regardless of income.

### b. Income Eligibility

- Children whose income falls at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines will have priority. This will be reflected in the Selection Interview ~~sheet and Scoring Sheet~~ **tab**.
- Up to 10% of the children enrolled may be from families who exceed the 100% poverty guidelines. The need for the program and its benefits to the child must be documented through: IEP, professional referral, behavioral health referral or documented family circumstances.
- Children whose family income falls between 101% and 130% of the Federal Poverty guidelines may be accepted given the following conditions have been met:
  - i. All categorically and income eligible applicants have been accepted into the program from that geographic area
  - ii. All children with disabilities have been accepted into the program from that geographic area
  - iii. Center waiting lists have been exhausted
  - iv. Community outreach efforts have been documented
  - v. Community Assessment reflects the declining population of 3-5 years old below the Federal Poverty Guidelines in a given geographic area
- Income must be verified before a determination of child's eligibility is made.
  - I. Income may be verified by the previous year's W-2 form, pay stubs or or written statements from employers, unemployment checks, child support, SSI or TANF. Income will be based on the previous year's income or the previous twelve (12) months, whichever more accurately reflects the family's income. A family is all persons living in the same household who are: (as per Performance Standard 1305.2) Supported by income of parent(s) or guardian(s) of child (ren) enrolling or participating in the program, and related by blood, marriage or adoption.
  - II. If a family had no income (ie homeless) then a statement of Non-verifiable Income will be signed **(electronically)** by the Head Start Staff and the parent/guardian indicating the reason for no income. Family's annual income will be calculated by examination of the above documentation by a Head Start Staff. In order to complete the income verification for each child, family income and size of family will then be compared to the most current Federal Poverty Guidelines.

The Head Start employee, who examines the documents and makes a determination of eligibility, must then sign **(electronically)** the ICV area of the application, ~~initial~~ the Income Worksheet **tab** and sign **(electronically)** the Eligibility Check Off Form verifying that staff ~~scanned and~~ reviewed and **photographed** specific income documents in determining the child is eligible to participate in the program based on family income.

The ERSEA Specialist(s) and/or FCP Manager will monitor this according to procedure ERSEA 602.

Employees who knowingly sign a verification form that contains false information will be disciplined as outlined in the Employee Handbook under Standards of Conducts-Ethics.

- Income verification for the first year's enrollment will be valid for the second year.
- Applications for the third year must be re-verified. ~~according to Federal Income Guidelines. A families' yearly income is then compared to the Federal Guidelines and families are determined to be eligible for Head Start or over income. Family Community Partnership staff is responsible for signing the Eligibility Verification Form once income has been verified. .~~

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- Head Start accepts children's applications regardless of race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin or gender.

c. Age

Proof of age is required and verified by FCP Staff. The FCP staff member who reviews the proof of age will sign ~~off on~~ the Eligibility Verification check off form attesting to his/her review of one of the following documents which can serve as proof of birth: Official certificate of birth, hospital certificate, baptismal certificate, ~~medical card listing date of birth~~, or medical immunization record with the birth date documented (a photo will be taken of the valid document).

- i. Homeless children should not be excluded based on lack of documentation.

Children must be between 3 and 5 years of age by kindergarten cut -off date for their school district for all program options. ~~(Exception to this is noted on Page 7 Section VII subpart b bullet 4)~~

- i. Kindergarten eligibility dates for the current school year are available from the ERSEA Specialist(s), Case Managers, or your local school district.

d. Need

- A Scoring Interview ~~Sheet (attachment #1)~~ (tab) is completed for each child. Points are gathered from the application and interview. All children are ranked on the same areas.
- A separate category entitled “other” has been added to the selection interview form. The purpose of this category is to assign points that are not reflected in the body of the interview form. The points assigned will be 4, 5 or 6 based on the FCP staff observations during the EVH. The reviewer will assign points based on the following criteria:

- i. 6 points will be assigned if the enrolled child or family is:

- Living in an unsafe living condition which includes: domestic abuse, child abuse (including physical, sexual, or emotional)
- Broken PFA, this would include an order that has been broken by the person who filed the original document.
- Parent/guardian discloses drug or alcohol abuse, parent discloses use of drugs or alcohol during pregnancy, parent states child born addicted to drug or alcohol.
- Parent/guardian discloses they are recovering from addictions (drugs or alcohol).
- Parent/guardian left Child with relative or other adult in their absence. Parent/guardian disclosed that he/she suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from a previous trauma.

- ii. 5 Points will be assigned if the enrolled child or family is:

- Living in unsafe conditions which include: infestation of insects or rodents, holes in ceiling/wall/floor, sub-flooring, broken windows or steps, no heat, or no water.
  - Family lives by a busy highway, busy parking lot, or a creek / stream which causes flooding concerns.
  - Family currently living without any external support (ie. No transportation, no friends to assist basic needs, or support has a severe negative effect on family).
  - Parent disclosed child in household is currently involved in the Juvenile Justice System.
  - Parent/guardian discloses family suffered loss of child within the last two years.
  - Parent suffers from physical health, dental or mental health issue and has no health insurance.
  - Family member has a significant health issue that causes a strain on family resources.
- iii. 4 Points will be assigned if the enrolled child or family has demonstrated and is noted in observations by the FCP staff:
- FCP staff observes inappropriate parenting (ie. Inattentiveness to crying infant, inappropriate expectations of children in the home, child is exhibiting dangerous and impulsive behaviors and parent is not addressing)
  - FCP staff observes inappropriate parenting (ie. Parent appears to have little or no knowledge of appropriate discipline techniques).
  - Parent discloses/appears to be intellectually disabled.
  - FCP staff observed possible undiagnosed developmental/speech delays.
  - Child has a severe mental health issue
  - Reacting with negativity towards a child (ren) in the home.
  - Has four or more children living in the home.
  - Frequent moves – (2-3 times in a year)
  - Parent/guardian cannot obtain employment due to criminal history.
  - On-going custody disputes.
  - Parent/Guardian has disclosed a recent (within 24 months) death of a household member, relative or other significant adult that provided a significant amount of financial, emotional or other type of support to the child and parent/guardian.
  - When income does not reflect the current living situation.
    - a. If a situation occurs that is not listed in the above criteria, a team meeting will take place between the FCP Manager and ERSEA Specialist to assign the appropriate points. Points will only be assigned by the reviewer of the application.

- e. The FCP staff completes a ~~Scoring Sheet (attachment #2)~~ **Selection Interview tab** based on information from the interview and a total score is determined. See “Determining Eligibility” 1 (b)
- f. The Selection Interview ~~Sheets~~ **tab** has questions with the scores ranging from 1-10. All FCP Staff receive training in rating questions and are given a written guide to ensure all applications are scored objectively.
- g. The ERSEA Specialist(s) reviews all Scoring Interview ~~Sheets and Scoring Sheets~~ **Tab** for accuracy. FCP Manager reviews all ERSEA Specialist’s eligibility verifications for accuracy.

### III. Selection Process

- a. Selection committee representatives are ERSEA committee members from Policy Council and/ or current Head Start parents. ~~The committee is trained in April on the selection process.~~
- After centers and number of slots have been identified as a result of the Community Assessment and have been approved by the Policy Council, then the ERSEA Specialist will determine number of vacancies available for each center to meet funded enrollment. ~~Selection Committee meets and ERSEA Specialist(s) reviews funded enrollment and the number of vacancies needed to meet funded enrollment in each geographic area. The ERSEA Specialist(s) and FCP Manager then presents the revised Eligibility Criteria to the committee for discussion. The ERSEA Committee will then make a motion at the next Policy Council to approve the revised criteria.~~ **the coded scoring sheets for members to accept children for vacancies according to highest need.**
- ~~First selection for all centers will be held by the end of May. The second selection for all centers will be held by the end of June. If needed a third selection will be held by the end of July.~~
- **The ERSEA Specialists(s) starting in May, will begin to accept families for the next program year using the priority point system in the approved Selection Criteria**
- Children will be selected accordingly:
  - i. Re-enrolling children
    - Any child, who was eligible from the previous year, will be automatically eligible for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, as long as they are age eligible (see section Ic). A child enrolling for a third year, his or her eligibility must be re-verified according to Federal Income Guidelines.
  - ii. Newly Processed applicants
    - Will be accepted based on the following prioritized system:
      - I. Children whose family income falls in the 0-100% level
      - II. Categorically Eligible Children **(homelessness and foster care)**
      - III. Children whose family income falls in the 101-130% level **are accepted according to need.** ~~based on scores~~
- ~~The Selection Committee reviews the scoring sheets. The children’s scoring sheet selected for enrollment are dated and initialed by at least two selection committee members.~~

- Re-enrolling and newly selected families are notified by phone of their child's selection into the program. This notification occurs within a week of the Selection. ~~Committee Meeting.~~ At the time of contact the following occurs:
  - i. Head Start Health Requirements are reviewed
  - ii. The existence of a medical home is determined
  - iii. Parents are informed that staff members are available to assist them in establishing a medical home or transportation to an appointment if necessary.
  - iv. Referral follow-up
  - ~~v. — Ages and Stages Social Emotional questionnaire~~
- If unable to reach by phone after two phone attempts, a letter is sent requesting the parent contact the program. If no contact from the parent is made within two weeks, The ERSEA Specialist(s) will assume that the parent is no longer interested in the program and the child's application status is ~~then placed in the Several Contact file~~ changed to "other" and a comment is added to Enrollment Notes to say "repeated contacts attempted". Should the parent contact the program later in the year, the child's application will be placed on the current waiting list.

#### IV Accepting Children with Disabilities

- a. Any child with a diagnosed disability will receive 2 points
- b. As mandated by Head Start Federal Guidelines, Blair County Head Start must ensure that a minimum of 10% of its total enrollment are children with a professionally diagnosed disability.
- c. After 10% of all enrollment opportunities are filled by children with disabilities, those children not selected will be placed on the current waiting list.

- **Transition Support Team**

- The Mental Health and Disability Services Coordinator, Education and FCP Manager will meet with the parent, multidisciplinary team, IEP teams, and or therapists prior to enrollment to discuss children requiring special accommodations to determine least restrictive environments and/or alternate placement.
- After the child is selected and placed in a classroom, a KID meeting will occur to discuss appropriate accommodations and make the classroom plan.

#### V Guidelines for Placement of Children

- ~~a. Classes located in the Altoona Area School District provide services to families living in Greenwood, Washington/Jefferson, Stevens and Fairview service areas. Children living in the Altoona Area School District will be serviced in classes located at Evergreen, Fairview, Greenwood, Hope, and Washington/Jefferson. Children will be assigned to classes in these centers based on geographical location and bus availability.~~  
Special circumstances require approval from ERSEA Specialist(s) and FCP Manager.
- b. Children living in the Bellwood School District will be provided services at the Tyrone Center.

- c. Fairview center provides services to families who live in the Fairview Hills and Cherry Grove housing developments.
- d. Claysburg center provides services to families living in the Claysburg School District.
- e. Children living in the Duncansville and East Freedom areas who are in the Spring Cove School District will be provided services in the Roaring Spring Center.
- f. Children living in the Roaring Spring area and are in the Spring Cove School District will be provided services at the Roaring Spring Center.
- g. Children living in the Hollidaysburg and Duncansville area who are in the Hollidaysburg School District are provided services in the Hollidaysburg and FOT centers. Special circumstances require approval from the ERSEA Specialist and Family Community Partnership Manager.
- h. Children living in the Martinsburg area who are in the Spring Cove School District are provided services at the Martinsburg Center.
- i. The Tyrone Center services families who live in the Tyrone School District service area.
- j. Williamsburg center services families in the Williamsburg School District's service area.
- ~~k. Once a child (ren) has been accepted into their current service area the child (ren) will remain in the "accepted" status regardless of the service area they move to prior to enrollment.~~
- l. Class size will be determined based on the predominant age of children who will participate in the class and whether or not a center-based double session variation is being implemented (determination of class age is made at start up and does not need to be re-determined thru out the year).**
  - For classes serving predominantly 4 or 5 year old children the average class size of that group of classes must be between 17 and 20 children.
  - When double session classes serve predominantly 4 or 5 year old children the average class size of that group of classes must be between 15 and 17 children.
  - For classes serving predominantly 3 year old children the average class size of that group of classes must be between 15 and 17 children.
  - When double session classes serve predominantly 3 year old children the average class size of classes must be between 13 and 15 children.

## VII Maintaining Funded Enrollment

### a. Program Vacancy/Waiting List

- A Head Start Grantee must maintain its funded enrollment.
  - When a vacancy becomes available the ERSEA Specialist will fill that vacancy within 30 calendar days, from the current center waiting list as per Performance Standard 1305.7.
  - Vacancies will be filled accordingly
    - a. The child with the highest points as determined by the selection interview and scoring sheet has priority unless there are extenuating circumstances that must be approved by the ERSEA Specialist and FCP Manager.



- b. A child that transfers from one service area to a new service area will be placed at the top of the waiting list.
- ~~c. After final selection, if vacancies still exist in any service area, waiting list is exhausted and all other options, such self transporting, transporting to a pick up spot etc, a child who turns 3 years old after the kindergarten cut-off date in that area may be enrolled to fill vacancy.~~
- Center transfers
  - a. It will take one week for a transfer to take place. Transportation Department must be notified and the children's education folder must be reviewed by the Education Manager. The Case Manager will forward the family folder to the **Family Community Partnership Supervisor** to review within four business days of notice of transfer. Once reviewed the FCP Supervisor will forward the family folder to the ERSEA Specialist(s) will then forward the family folder to the appropriate Case Manager.
- b. If a center has exhausted their current center waiting list the following must occur
  - Extra recruitment efforts in that service area will be initiated such as:
    - Flyers sent home with school district children
    - Flyers hung in local businesses
    - Additional recruitment at WIC sites
    - Flyers distributed to pizza shops and grocery stores, etc.
    - Community events
  - Enrollment in individual classrooms, where there is a waiting list, may be increased up to 18 children to maintain funded enrollment program wide.
  - Children whose income falls between 101% and 130% of the federal poverty guidelines may be enrolled once the criteria in (Section I subpart b) has been met.
  - ~~• Children who turned three years of age after the school districts cut-off date for kindergarten may be enrolled to maintain funded enrollment.~~

## VIII Other

- a. No child's enrollment or participation in the Head Start program is contingent on payment of a fee as outlined in Performance Standard 1305.9
- b. Children must attend the center in the service area which they reside unless parents are in training, working or attend training in another service area. This should be addressed to the ERSEA Specialist(s). If needed ERSEA Specialist(s) will discuss with appropriate Manager for approval.
- c. Transportation
  - Blair County Head Start is not required to provide transportation.
  - Transportation routes are determined yearly by the location of families and centers.
  - The availability of transportation offered may determine where a child is placed. If a family chooses a center option where transportation is not available for the child (ren)

in the area they live, they will be required to self transport to a location on the transportation route or to the center the child attends, upon approval of the FCP Manager, Transportation Manager and the ERSEA Specialist(s). ~~For example, in the Greenwood center the following will occur:~~

- ~~○ Children that live in Evergreen manor will only be offered transportation for pm classes.~~
- ~~○ Children that live in the Lakemont area will only be offered transportation for the pm classes.~~

~~These transportation stipulations may change yearly based on program options and agency resources.~~

- If a family moves during the program year to one of the above location, the family will be required to self-transport the child to a location on the transportation route or to the center, or the child can be placed on the waiting list until a vacancy become available.
- Families being recruited for the Evergreen, Fairview, Hope and Williamsburg centers will self-transport their children to school, as these are designated self-transport centers.
- Families living in the Washington –Jefferson area within a five block radius to the center are required to self transport their children.
- Families living within a 3-5 block radius of any other Head Start center will also self-transport their child to school. An exception to this would be any child that attends a childcare center that is located within three blocks of the Head Start center. In this situation, transportation may be provided.
- If a child is attending a center outside of their normal service area transportation will not be provided.

#### d. Custody

- Proof of custody, adoption or placement must be provided to Head Start staff, and a custody/placement form completed and distributed to the appropriate staff. A ~~copy~~ photograph of the custody or placement orders will be placed in Central file (with child's application). ~~Will be attached to ChildPlus in the Custody Tab.~~
- Parent's court ordered visitation of children must be made outside of Head Start so it does not interfere with child's class time.
- Head Start staff will not be considered "supervisors" for visitation purposes. Supervised visitation must occur outside of Head Start, so it does not interfere with child's class time.
- Head Start will follow the custody, adoption or placement order when releasing child.
- It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to relay information regarding education, health related information, and other program services as per the custody, adoption or placement order.
- If in the course of the year the guardianship of a child changes, Head Start must be notified and a copy of new custody papers must be on file. At that time a new

application must be completed including the Foster parent's and guardian's social security numbers.

e. PFA orders

- The program will follow a PFA order until it is not longer valid as it pertains to the Head Start child. The PFA form will be completed and circulated to appropriate staff. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the Case Manager of any changes including but not limited to orders that have been terminated.

Policy Council approved

Reviewed and revised: February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Approved: March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Rvsd: Dec.2016

Reviewed: January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Approved February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017

Reviewed: February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Approved: February 23, 2018