

SNOHOMISH COUNTY EARLY HEAD START

Policy Title Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, and Enrollment and Attendance

Policy

Snohomish County Early Head Start (SC EHS) shall implement a systematic process for recruiting, determining eligibility, and selecting EHS eligible children and pregnant women to ensure compliance and timely enrollments. Purposes of this policy are the following:

1. To actively inform families with eligible children and pregnant women within the service area of the availability of services and encourage them to enroll.
2. To ensure enrollment of children and pregnant women from eligible families within targeted service areas.
3. To enroll at least 10% of children with disabilities.
4. To enroll children who are homeless or in foster care.
5. To enroll children and pregnant women without regard to race, sex, national origin, or religion.

Performance Standard(s) 1302.1, 1302 Subpart A

Definitions

Eligible means families with children under age 3 and pregnant women who have the greatest need, have been verified that they meet income requirements and, live within the SC EHS service area.

Enrollment means the official acceptance of a family by EHS and the completion of all procedures necessary for a child/pregnant woman and family to begin receiving services.

ERSEA Team: A committee including the EHS Director, ERSEA Assistant and at least one Infant Toddler Specialists who has received additional training on ERSEA policies who collectively review applications and documentation to ensure accuracy and enrollment of families who will most benefit from EHS services.

First day of services means the first day the child or pregnant woman begins receiving services.

Homelessness means according to the McKinney-Vento Act (as defined in part 1305) individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes sharing the housing of another person due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason, living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations. Also includes emergency or transition shelters, abandoned hospitals, or children awaiting foster care placement. Also includes housing for the night that is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used for regular sleeping accommodations. Also includes living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, and similar settings.

Income means gross cash income and includes earned income, military income, veteran's benefits, social security benefits, unemployment compensation, and public assistance benefits.

Income Guidelines means the Federal Poverty Guidelines specified in Section 645 of the Head Start Act.

Low-income family means a family whose total annual income before taxes is equal to, or less than, the current year's Federal Poverty income guidelines. For the purpose of eligibility, a child/pregnant person from a family that is receiving public assistance (TANF, SSI, SNAP), a child/pregnant person from a family that is homeless, or a child in foster care is eligible even if the family income exceeds the income guidelines.

Over Income means a family whose total annual income before taxes exceeds the current year's federal poverty level guidelines.

Program year means the year for which a family is applying. It is the consecutive twelve-month period from September 1 to August 31 of every year.

Public Assistance means benefits or services through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.)

Recruitment means the systematic ways in which NSC EHS identifies pregnant women and families whose children are eligible for EHS services, informs them of the services available, and encourages them to apply for enrollment in the program.

Selection means the systematic process used to review all applications for EHS services and to identify those children/pregnant women that are to be enrolled in the program.

Selection Criteria Points are those points assigned to each family based on the areas of need that are indicated on the Program Application form. These points help the NSC EHS to identify the "most eligible" applicant for each open slot.

Verification means SC EHS staff viewing appropriate documentation to determine if the family is income eligible.

Wait List means a list is maintained by SC EHS of all complete Program Applications including total number of Selection Criteria points. The Wait List is used to fill slots as vacancies occur.

Requirements

1. The family is eligible for EHS services if the family income is below federal poverty level, the family is homeless as defined in part 1305, the child is in foster care or the family is eligible for public assistance including TANF, SSI, and/or SNAP benefits.
2. At least 10% of the children enrolled in EHS must be children with identified disabilities.
3. Families whose incomes fall between 101-130% may be enrolled based on prioritized selection criteria and will not exceed 35% of total enrollment.
4. No more than 10% of the EHS enrollment may be from families whose income exceeds 131% or higher and will be enrolled based on priority points.
5. A wait list of eligible applicants shall be maintained and monitored by SC EHS ERSEA Team.
6. Selection criteria priority points will be based on data from the Community Needs Assessment and will be updated annually to ensure SC EHS is serving children and families in our community that will most benefit from EHS services.

Procedures

Recruitment

1. Recruitment is an ongoing activity and shall be a major focus until the program is fully enrolled and to maintain a wait list of applicants, as required by the Performance Standard.
2. Recruitment activities shall be planned, implemented, and overseen by the EHS Supervisor.
 - a. The Infant Toddler Specialist (ITS) has a responsibility to actively recruit families into the program.
 - b. The ITS shall regularly discuss ongoing recruitment activities with the EHS Supervisor.
 - c. The EHS Supervisor shall monitor ITS caseloads, current enrollment, vacant slots, and wait list on a regular basis.
3. Recruitment materials, including news releases, advertisements, brochures, handouts and any other printed materials shall be subject to review and approval by the SC EHS Supervisor prior to distribution. Recruitment materials must comply with the standards established by Snohomish County for publications and publicity.
4. Recruitment activities include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Communication with families currently enrolled in Snohomish County ECEAP or SC EHS, home visits, parent meetings, and other family events.
 - b. Collaboration with Snohomish County Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ESIT) housed in the Snohomish County Human Services Department and with other Part C providers in the community.
 - c. Participation in presentations to community agencies and service providers as appropriate.
 - d. Distribution of recruitment materials to community partners, service providers, and businesses that may be in contact with potential participants, as appropriate.
 - e. Follow-up on formal and informal referrals from service providers, community partners, and parents.
5. SC EHS shall cooperate with other agencies, including Snohomish County Head Start, in helping the general public as well as potential participants learn more about SC EHS.

Application

1. Parents/pregnant people will complete Program Application and Housing Questionnaire and send to the NSC EHS office. Parents/pregnant people may contact the SC EHS office for help to complete the Program Application if needed.
2. EHS Supervisor will collect all completed Program Application and Housing Questionnaire forms prior to a determination of eligibility.
3. The EHS Supervisor or ESEA Team member will send a notification to each applicant family after the initial screening, indicating further consideration for eligibility or placement on a wait list.
4. If the program is fully enrolled, the EHS Supervisor will place remaining eligible children/pregnant people on a wait list which is updated monthly. Children/pregnant people are prioritized on the wait list by income, selection criteria, and service area. The number of selection criteria points will be documented at the top of the program application.

Income Verification

1. The assigned ITS Lead will schedule an appointment(s) with the applicant to verify income and/or age of the child; a second ITS (peer reviewer) will accompany the assigned ITS Lead at this meeting. This may occur in the family's home or another place convenient for the family.
2. The EHS Supervisor and ITS must verify the family income before determining that a child/pregnant person is eligible for enrollment. See *Performance Standard 1302.12*.
3. Income is verified by examining any of the following documents representing the income for the previous 12 months, or the preceding calendar year (whichever is most reflective of their income): individual income tax return, W-2 forms, pay stubs, pay envelopes, written statements from employers, or documentation showing current status as recipients of TANF, SSI or SNAP benefits. As a last resort, if a family does not receive documentation of their income/wages, a Statement of Income may be completed. If a family has no income for the past 12 months, they may complete a Statement of Circumstance detailing how their basic needs are met.
4. Eligibility determination documentation will be kept for all families currently enrolled and for one year after they have either stopped receiving services and are no longer enrolled.
5. The parent/guardian, ITS and EHS Supervisor must sign the Eligibility/Enrollment Verification form indicating eligibility and that the information is correct and true. Any false information provided by parents/guardians, or ITS staff may result in termination from the program.
6. The income of the parents of pregnant teen a does not have to be considered in determining the income eligibility of a pregnant or parenting teen.
7. The assigned ITS Lead will provide all enrollment documentation to the Peer Reviewer for review and verification using Verification Checklist.
8. The EHS Supervisor reviews ChildPlus and file documentation for accuracy using Verification Checklist.
9. Staff will always adhere to the County Employee Standards of Conduct, including when verifying eligibility.
 - a. If errors in the verification process are identified, the EHS Supervisor will provide coaching/counseling to staff. Should errors continue, staff will receive a verbal warning and a written improvement plan will be developed and implemented.
 - b. If errors on verification documents appear to be intentional by staff, County staff will investigate, and disciplinary actions will be taken as warranted.
 - i. When an apparent intentional inaccuracy is identified, the EHS Supervisor will review the file and notify the Division Manager
 - ii. If, after consultation with Division Manager, the discrepancy continues to appear intentional, an investigation will be initiated, and the employee may be placed on administrative leave.
 - iii. EHS Supervisor, Division Manager, and other County staff will conduct an investigation that will include an interview with the employee with union representation at employee's request.
 - iv. If investigation findings indicate the inaccuracy was intentional, the EHS Supervisor and Division Manager will implement disciplinary actions consistent with direction from the Human Services Department Director in consultation with County legal counsel.

- v. Based upon documentation, employee statement(s), and severity of circumstances, progressive disciplinary action will be implemented, including oral warning, written reprimand, suspension, demotion or discharge.
- vi. Employee may utilize union grievance procedure for any of the above outcomes
- vii. County legal counsel will determine referral for prosecution

Selection

1. When a vacancy exists, the vacancy will be filled within 30 calendar days.
2. When a vacancy occurs, the EHS Supervisor and ERSEA Team will review the applicants on the wait list. A family will be selected that demonstrates the highest need based on income, risk factors, and service area indicated on Program Application form.
3. Current enrollment statistics are reviewed to ensure full enrollment and that at least 10% of enrollment consists of children with disabilities. Both children with disabilities and pregnant women are given priority.
4. When a family is selected for enrollment, the EHS Coordinator will assign the family to the appropriate ITS. Consideration is given to the ITS's caseload including the number and date of expected transitions out of the program, needs of the families on the caseload, and potential conflicts of interest.
5. The ITS assigned to the family will call the family to schedule an appointment to verify that the income the family reported on the Program Application form makes them eligible for services. If the family is over-income and the child has a diagnosed disability, the family may still be eligible for services.

Enrollment

1. After verification of income, the applicant and the ITS will sign the Eligibility/Enrollment Verification form verifying income was reviewed and that the family understands that they are **now** enrolled in the program.
2. The ITS will present the Program Expectations Agreement and Confidentiality Agreement for discussion with the parent. The parent will be asked to read both forms and the ITS will check with the parent to ensure that there is full understanding of meaning of the forms by the parent. This is the beginning of the orientation process. This step may occur at the same meeting as income verification depending on circumstances.
3. During the initial home visits, the ITS will discuss the Family Partnership Agreement. This is the beginning of the family partnership agreement building process, which takes generally between 3-6 weeks to complete.
4. The ITS and the parent(s) will review portions of the Parent Handbook at each of the initial home visits (2-4 visits) to ensure the parent understands the information. Once the parent feels they understand the information presented in the Parent Handbook and the program expectations, the ITS and the parent will sign the Program Expectations Agreement and Confidentiality Agreement. This continues the Family Partnership Agreement process.
5. Enrolled families may remain in the program until the child's third birthday and may qualify for an extension if they are waiting for services at ECEAP or another preschool program.

Re-enrollment or Subsequent Enrollments

1. If a child or pregnant woman has been exited from the program for more than 30 days and wishes to return, the parent/pregnant woman must submit a new application. If there are no vacancies, the application will be placed on the wait list.

2. If the parent of a child currently enrolled in SC EHS becomes pregnant or adopts a child and wants to enroll the “new” child in EHS services, it is considered a new enrollment and the application, housing questionnaire and verification of eligibility will be completed again based on the family’s current situation.

Attendance

For participation in the Home Visit Model program, refer to Home Visit Policy and Procedures.

1. Families may choose to return to the wait list if they cannot participate in the program at the current time.

Date approved by the Policy Council: 4/7/2010

Revisions approved by the Policy Council: 5/25/2010

Revisions approved by the Policy Council: 3/31/25