Eligibility
Policy/Procedure

To ensure an accurate and consistent procedure is followed when determining Head Start eligibility.

Policy/Procedure:

- Pregnant mothers and children from birth to age 4 will be considered for Head Start services based on the criteria listed in the Enrollment Point System. Age of participants will be verified through medical/immunizations records. In cases where this is not possible, a birth certificate or other acceptable form of verification will be required.
- In exceptional cases, children who turn 5 before the beginning of the school year may be considered for continued placement. Criteria for consideration: the child must be on an active IEP, there must be at least 2 written recommendations from different service providers, and the child must turn 5 years of age within 30 days of the public school cut-off for kindergarten enrollment. All requests will be brought to the Head Start Interdisciplinary Team for approval.
- A minimum of 55% of the children/families who are enrolled will be from below the federal poverty guidelines. 35% of enrolled children/families may be from a family living between 100 – 130% of poverty guidelines. Up to 10% of enrolled children/families who are enrolled may have incomes that exceed the income guidelines. The Enrollment point system heavily weighs income eligible families above families who are above the federal poverty guidelines.
- Families below the federal poverty guidelines will have priority for enrollment. Enrollees falling between 100% and 130% will have reasons for their placement documented in the ChildPlus database.
- The family income must be verified by the Head Start program before determining that a child is eligible to participate in the program. Federal Income guidelines and definitions of income will be used to assist the staff when verifying income. Income will be taken from the previous year, current year, or projected depending on what is most accurate and appropriate for the family’s situation. The Community Relations Manager will make all final determinations of eligibility status.
- To verify income, Head Start staff will examine and keep proof of documents from any of the following:
  - Individual Income Tax Form
  - W-2 Forms
  - Pay Stubs
  - Pay Envelopes
  - Written statements from employers
  - Documentation showing public assistance payments, foster care placement, homelessness, or social security disability payments.
  - If the family reports no income for the relevant time period, staff will complete the “certification of no income” line, with an explanation of the situation.
- Arrowhead Head Start requires families to provide income verification documents at time of application. However, in such cases where a family does not have access to,
or is unable to provide said documents from specific agencies or employers, staff will get a written consent from the parent/guardian to request the information for them.

- After the annual income is determined, the Head Start staff person and the parent/guardian will sign the electronic Head Start application attesting to the fact that the family income is prepared to the best of their knowledge. If there is a connectivity issue with the electronic application then staff person will complete the paper copy of the income page and attach it electronically at a later time.
- Income eligibility determined at the time of application will be used for the year identified by the Head Start income form. Age eligible children who complete a full year of program services and wish to continue the following year may retain their eligibility status according to traditional Head Start and Early Head Start guidelines. Children from Early Head Start wishing to enroll in traditional Head Start will have their income reverified. Income redetermination may happen at any time if the family’s financial situation changes or if the family exits the program and reenters at a later date.

Staff Training on Eligibility

- Staff responsible for income eligibility determination will be trained to do so before making such determinations. Training will come from the Community Relations Manager (that includes receipt of the annual Recruitment and Enrollment Guide) as well as peer mentoring until the staff person demonstrates an understanding of the requirements. Training will include cultural sensitivity as well as respectful approaches to issues such as disabilities, domestic violence, privacy, and circumstances regarding low-income family situations.
- Staff found to be intentionally falsifying income documentation will be at risk of immediate termination of employment as well as potential legal action.
- Parents/guardians found to be intentionally falsifying or withholding income sources will be immediately ineligible for Arrowhead Head Start services.
- All staff responsible for determining income eligibility are required to complete the annual recruitment training (typically held in January).

This policy complies with Head Start Performance Standards Section 1302.12

Revised and Approved by Policy Council on 2-6-19.