

Program Self-Assessment Booklet 16

Program Design: Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance

Core Question to guide the Self-Assessment team:

How does the grantee approach eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance in an attempt to meet the needs of Head Start-eligible families and in response to the Community Assessment?

Purpose:

The purpose is to ensure that the program is abiding by Federal requirements and procedures for determining eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance of children.

This booklet will help you to assess if the program meets Federal *Performance Standards* relating to eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance. Related *Performance Standards* include: 1305.3-1305.8; 1308.5

As you conduct your assessment of the program's approach to eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance, pay close attention to:

- How the program determines who in their community is most in need of Head Start services
- The strategies used to recruit children and families who are most in need
- The process used to select children for the program
- How the program ensures full enrollment
- How the program responds to children who are absent

An adapted version of the *PRISM* Income Eligibility Data Collection Form (and its instructions) has been included. Team members may find it to be a helpful tool in assessing the program's selection of eligible children and families. Other helpful tools to support data collection in this area follow.

Review:

Ask the Head Start director and/or responsible manager to provide you with access to the following documents:

- Community Assessment
- Eligibility and selection criteria
- Written information on the recruitment process and the recruitment areas
- Prioritized waiting list of eligible children (Caution: in order to maintain confidentiality, only staff persons serving on your assessment team are able to view this information)
- Attendance records
- Ongoing monitoring reports
- Class lists and home visitor assignments
- **Important data sources relevant to this area such as the *PRISM* report, *PIR* data, strategic plan or short and long term program goals**

Use the questions below to assist your document review:

Does the Community Assessment include the following information about the Early Head Start and/or Head Start geographic area?	Yes	No
Demographic makeup of eligible children (number, where they live, race, ethnicity)		
Community strengths and assets		
Other child care and child development programs that are serving Head Start eligible children (include publicly funded programs)		
Estimated number of children with disabilities (birth to 4 years old), including types and relevant services available		
Data regarding the education, health, nutrition and social service needs of Head Start eligible children and their families		
The education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of Head Start eligible children and their families as defined by families and by institutions in the community that serve young children		
Resources in the community that could be used to address the needs of Head Start eligible children and families, including an assessment of their availability and accessibility		
Summary and analysis of the data collected for the Community Assessment		

Is there evidence that the program uses the information from the Community Assessment to determine the following:

A plan for recruiting eligible families? Yes No

Determining selection criteria? Yes No

Are there procedures for selecting children based on:

Family income? Yes No

Age of the child? Yes No

The extent to which a child or family meets program-specific selection criteria? Yes No

Are at least 90% of your currently enrolled families living below the poverty guideline?

Yes No Comment: _____

If a vacancy occurs more than 60 days before the end of the program year, is it filled with another child within 30 days?

Yes No Comment: _____

Does the program regularly calculate average daily attendance? Does the program analyze the causes for absenteeism when the monthly average daily attendance falls below 85%?

Yes No Comment: _____

Is there a waiting list that ranks children according to selection criteria?

Yes No Comment: _____

In cases where children have four or more unexcused absences, has the program documented its attempt to intervene with family support procedures?

Yes No Comment: _____

Interview:

One or two members of the Self-Assessment team should interview a number of Head Start families as well as staff persons responsible for the recruitment, selection, and enrollment of Head Start families. In many programs, this responsibility rests with the family services manager and his/her staff.

Questions for families:

How did you find out about Head Start and what was it like for you to get into the program?

Questions for staff:

How do families in your community find out about Head Start? (See if the program uses a variety of strategies to reach out to families; see if the program staff is willing to assist families through the application process.)

Tell me how the decision is made to accept a particular child into the program. (Listen to be sure that there are established criteria used to evaluate applications and that a consistent process is used to make decisions.)

What is the current average daily attendance of your program? What are you doing to address the low attendance if it is below 85%?

How does the program recruit those most in need of Head Start services, including previously underserved populations?

How does your program ensure that at least 10% of those served are children with disabilities? What is your progress in meeting this goal?

How do you assign children to program options offered by your program? (Listen to be sure that options are offered to families in accordance with their needs.)

What is your funded enrollment for children? How many children are currently in the program? How do you maintain the funded enrollment level? Do you fill vacancies as they occur?

Instructions for Completing the Income Eligibility Data Collection Form

(Adapted from *PRISM 2005*)

The Income Eligibility Data Collection Form is included to support the Head Start Bureau's efforts to identify potential income eligibility-related areas of non-compliance. An adapted version of this form is included here to help the Self-Assessment team conduct a thorough review of a sample of income eligibility determination records.

Note: The Income Eligibility Data Collection form requires the reviewer to examine children's files. Only a staff person may access and review these files based on the program's confidentiality policy.

Data Collection Form Completion:

1. **Column A:** To facilitate this process, programs should select an appropriate sample of files to review. Programs with actual enrollment of less than 20 should review all of the children's files (e.g., a program with 17 enrolled children should review all 17 files). For actual enrollment of 20-37 children, programs should review a sample of 20 files; for actual enrollment of 38-77 children, programs should review a sample of 25 files; for actual enrollment of 78-597 children, programs should review 30 files; and for actual enrollment of 598 children or more, programs should review a sample of 35 files.
2. **Column B:** For each child, determine if the program identified the child as income eligible or as part of the program's enrollment from "over-income" families.
 - a. For all children identified by the program as income eligible (i.e., from a household that meets the low-income guidelines), enter a Y in column B and proceed to step 3 (column C).
 - b. If the child was enrolled as an "over-income" child, note that on the attached form by entering an N in column B. If you enter an N in column B, your work for that specific child's file has been completed and you should proceed to the next file.
3. **Column C:** Determine if there is a signed statement by a Head Start program employee stating that the child was determined to be income eligible to participate in the program.
 - a. If the file contains a signed determination statement, enter a Y in column C and proceed to step 4 (column D).
 - b. If the file does not contain a signed determination statement, enter an N in column C. If you enter an N in column C, your work for that specific child's file has been completed and you should proceed to the next file.
4. **Column D:** Determine if there is additional documentation that was used in verifying and determining the child's income eligibility.
 - a. If the file contains additional documentation used to verify the child's income eligibility status, enter a Y in column D and proceed to step 5 (column E).
 - b. If the file does not contain additional documentation used to verify the child's

income eligibility status, enter an N in column D. If you enter an N in column D, your work for that specific child’s file has been completed and you should proceed to the next file.

5. **Column E:** Review the documentation used to determine eligibility and make your own determination about the child’s eligibility.
 - a. If you concur with the program that the child is income eligible (i.e., from a household that meets the low-income guidelines), enter a Y in column E.
 - b. If you conclude that the child is not income eligible (i.e., “over-income”), enter an N in column E.

Below are correct and incorrect examples of form completion. Please review these examples before beginning your work.

Example of Correct Data Collection Form Completion:

A	B	C	D	E
	Program has enrolled the child as an income eligible (from a low-income household) child	Reviewer finds a signed statement in folder identifying that eligibility has been verified	Reviewer finds in folder documentation used by the program for determining eligibility	Reviewer supports grantee’s determination of income eligibility
File Number	(Y or N)	(Y or N)	(Y or N)	(Y or N)
1	Y	N		
2	N			
3	Y	Y	Y	Y

In the above example, the reviewer correctly stopped working on File Number 1 after entering N in column C. Also, the reviewer correctly filled out the form by leaving the rest of the columns blank after writing N in column B for File Number 2. For File Number 3, the reviewer filled in all four columns because every column had a Y in them. This example demonstrates the correct completion of the form because once an N is entered into a column, the reviewer should stop work for that file and move on to begin work on the next file.

Example of Incorrect Data Collection Form Completion:

A	B	C	D	E
	Program has enrolled the child as an income eligible (from a low-income household) child	Reviewer finds a signed statement in folder identifying that eligibility has been verified	Reviewer finds in folder documentation used by the program for determining eligibility	Reviewer supports grantee’s determination of income eligibility
File Number	(Y or N)	(Y or N)	(Y or N)	(Y or N)
1	Y	Y	N	Y

In the above example, the reviewer should have stopped work on File Number 1 after entering N in column D. Since there is no additional documentation verifying income eligibility, it would be impossible for the reviewer to make a determination of support for the grantee’s initial determination of income eligibility. Therefore, column E should have been left blank and the reviewer would begin work on File Number 2.

Income Eligibility Data Collection Form

Actual enrollment: _____

Number of files to be reviewed: _____

A	B	C	D	E
File Number	Program has enrolled the child as an income eligible (from a low-income household) child (Y or N)	Reviewer finds a signed statement in folder identifying that eligibility has been verified (Y or N)	Reviewer finds in folder documentation used by the program for determining eligibility (Y or N)	Reviewer supports grantee's determination of income eligibility (Y or N)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				

A	B	C	D	E
File Number	Program has enrolled the child as an income eligible (from a low-income household) child (Y or N)	Reviewer finds a signed statement in folder identifying that eligibility has been verified (Y or N)	Reviewer finds in folder documentation used by the program for determining eligibility (Y or N)	Reviewer supports grantee's determination of income eligibility (Y or N)
19				
20				
21				
22				
23				
24				
25				
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32				
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34				
35				

Team Member Summary Worksheet

Summary of Results for Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance

Areas where the program is working well. Provide examples of program strengths or areas where the program exceeds *Performance Standards*:

Areas where the program needs improvement:

Additional areas of concern:
