

**Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Office Hour:
Utilizing Child Care Subsidies Office Hour**

Moderator: Welcome to this Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Office Hour. Be sure to download all handouts, videos, and slides prior to viewing the Office Hour. During the presentation, you may be asked to pause the Office Hour and complete an activity, such as viewing a video, reviewing a handout, or reading a resource. Once you complete the action, return to the Office Hour and continue viewing. Now let's get started with this Office Hour.

Julie Salois-Tourville: Welcome to this Office Hour, focused on ERSEA and how to utilize child care subsidies within your partnership. ERSEA stands for Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance. Today, we will discuss the many elements of ERSEA, with special focus on developing a selection criteria that focuses on families who are eligible or who have obtained a child care subsidy.

My name is Julie Salois-Tourville, a senior training and technical associate at the Office of Head Start's National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations. Joining me today is Kathie Boling, senior research associate from the Office of Child Care's National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, quite a mouthful. Kathie, do you want to say hello?

Kathie Boling: Hi, everyone.

Julie: Thank you, Kathie. So today during the Early Head Start Child Care orientation, you may have participated in the ERSEA presentation where we learned about the program shift to prioritize families who are working or in school or training, and how ERSEA processes directly link to your grant budget. Today, we're going to focus on the use of the selection criteria within your Early Head Start Child Care Partnership. Kathie, will you begin with the first E, Eligibility?

Kathie: Thanks, Julie. Our objective with our time today is to focus on the selection portion of ERSEA. First, let's briefly review the eligibility for Early Head Start and for child care subsidies. Please make sure to download the eligibility flowchart for additional information. This is a detailed guide for Early Head Start and subsidy eligibility that also has implications for selection and enrollment. Determining eligibility is the first step in the selection and enrollment process, and it's the front door to the program.

Oftentimes, the first action for the family is during eligibility. Parents passing through these doors will share their personal information and income documents. They may be telling their personal story which may include homelessness or domestic violence. And English may not be their first language. How this process is designed between the Early Head Start and Child Care program is crucial to building a positive relationship with the parents.

As you can see in this side-by-side eligibility comparison, there are similarities regarding subsidy and Early Head Start criteria. Head Start and child care subsidy eligibility are processed through different agencies. Both Early Head Start and child care have income, age, and a focus on special populations. Understanding how to support a family's access to child care subsidy in your state and county is very important. The Early Head Start Partnerships Grant enhances the focus on child care subsidy parent activity as a criteria. This is different from the usual eligibility for Head Start. This pivot requires programs to adjust thinking and practices for selecting infants and toddlers for enrollment.

Have you had to make changes in your initial selection process including this parent activity criteria? Ensuring your partnership is supporting intentional outreach to families who are Early Head Start income eligible, and eligible for CCDF subsidies is crucial. A previous Office Hour, CCDF Subsidy Authorization Processes and Provider Payment Practices, can provide further information about eligibility that may be helpful. So please go back and go through this one.

Before I move on to recruitment, during the Early Head Start Child Care Orientation ERSEA session, we reviewed the 2008 ACF Program Instruction regarding citizenship of children who are enrolled in Early Head Start programs. This ACF Program Instruction supports families' access to child care subsidy when citizenship is a concern. As you can see, child care has this as a criteria for eligibility. This program instruction weighs that criteria. Because your program is under the EHS standards, the child's citizenship or immigration status is not considered as an eligibility criteria. This document, Citizens' Immigration Status PI, is available for your download.

Now let's look at recruitment. Your partnership may already support recruitment activities, including ensuring materials in multiple languages, outreach within communities where families with young children frequent, such as WIC, health services, the children's library, and family service groups. Your local child care resource and referral is also a resource within the child care community. They may also be your local subsidy agency where you would apply for eligibility. How can you maximize your efforts to recruit the low-income working families with infants and toddlers? In addition to the basic recruitment efforts of flyers, events and advertising, you will need to partner and develop agreements with the CCDF lead agency in your state and your county for recruiting families who meet the specific subsidy eligibility.

What recruitment activities have you developed to meet your 25 percent enrollment for subsidy? In order to maximize your recruitment efforts, you need to understand state CCDF and your local subsidy eligibility offices' policies and procedures regarding the eligibility and authorization payments for full-time care. This relationship will maximize full-time enrollments and the necessary receipt of increased and consistent financial support through the subsidy payments.

Because each child care program is unique, Early Head Start Child Care grantees should work closely with the CCDF lead agency and local subsidy agency to ensure that each partner understands their role in recruitment of subsidy-eligible children. There needs to be opportunities between your partnership staff and the subsidy's case workers in the form of formal training opportunities and perhaps informal meetings to discuss different scenarios that have come about.

Another important opportunity for recruitment is the development of contracts for subsidy child care slots. A subcontract agreement or an MOU should be developed. An in-depth discussion of agreements and subcontracts is available to you from a previous Office Hour called, Setting up your Partnership: Subrecipient Versus Contractor. Take time to review that Office Hour too. If recruitment efforts are effective, your program will have many families applying for placement. The next step is a well thought out selection process. Julie, will you share the main focus of our Office Hour now?

Julie: Thank you, Kathie. And we have finally arrived — the selection process. The selection of children and families for the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Program is so important for a successful collaboration. Existing Early Head Start selection criteria will need to be reexamined and/or redeveloped to reflect the priority for placements in the Partnership, which holds the parent activity of employment, job training, school, and job search, as a focus. Using the community assessment, your partnership will need to reflect on how to prioritize the enrollment of the neediest families who are working or in

school. The selection criteria ranks the various factors that parents and families have and helps the program decide who to accept and enroll into the Partnership Program.

Additionally, the selection criteria will help prioritize children with suspected or diagnosed disabilities. Programs have a 10 percent requirement for enrolled children with disabilities which is at the awardee level, not at each program site. Achieving the 10 percent will take some careful planning and development of other partnerships with programs such as Early Intervention and other referral agencies.

Let's take a few moments to reflect on the selection criteria. You can download the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership selection criteria activity, as you see on the screen here, to use as a learning tool for the Early Head Start Child Care management team, policy council, or governing body. The activity allows you to reflect on vignettes of families and practice ranking them for potential enrollment. Using your community assessment, criteria are identified to be considered, prioritized, or ranked. In our activity, there's some starred areas at the bottom. You could add in specific criteria that reflect your community.

Criteria to be considered are eligibility, families who may be experiencing homelessness, a child diagnosed or suspected with disabilities, the age of the child — maybe you're looking at the youngest child — disability of the parent, a single parent, two parents. The community assessment may reveal other criteria. So for example, you may be servicing families in a community that has a high percentage of incarcerated parents.

Or your community may have an influx of new families moving in that have different cultural backgrounds. Ranking should be assigned to each criteria your partnership selects. The rankings can be by high, medium, or low, as you can see on the screen and in our simple activity, or many programs assign a point system. More points are assigned to criteria that are higher priority.

Because the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership intends to target families who are Early Head Start income eligible, but who are eligible for a child care subsidy, the parent activity becomes a higher ranked criteria. The parent policy and governing body approves the selection criteria, and this downloadable activity can help with training for this important process. Let's do an example. If a family were applying to the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership, and they were not working, they were not in school or in training, and they weren't looking for employment, their enrollment may be better placed with a traditional Early Head Start program if it's available in your community, thus reserving the Early Head Start Child Care enrollment for the family who is Early Head Start income eligible and working or in school.

Ensuring the right families are selected for enrollment is imperative for success. The selection process also helps to ensure a qualified and ranked waiting list. A waiting list in Early Head Start Child Care Partnership should be maintained, and it should be active. You want to ensure that families are contacted periodically to ensure that they're still interested in enrollment. A separate waiting list just for the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership program is a good idea, as the Partnership selection criteria will reflect the priority of serving low-income working families. If your program is currently under enrolled as you begin the startup of the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership, it may not yet have a waiting list. But you should still have a process for the creation of a waiting list.

If the selection process is strong and the program targets the appropriate families, full enrollment will be maintained. Early Head Start Child Care Partnership funding supports stabilization of enrollment. Consistent care for children and ongoing support for their families are important elements for quality care. Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grant is intended to provide stable funding through an agreement subcontract with child care partners. Working together and keeping a qualified waiting list will help to fill vacancies within the allowable time of 30 days, and ensuring 10 percent of enrolled children have been identified with disabilities.

Further, if the selection criteria prioritizes families who are working, budget funds will be easily monitored. The strength of the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership is that if the parent does have a change in activity, they are no longer working or in school, they're no longer in a training program, the Early Head Start Partnership grant can financially support the child's continued enrollment. Another aspect of enrollment regarding children receiving subsidy is a parent copay. CCDF requires all states to establish a sliding fee scale to provide for cost sharing by the family. Copayments are based on family income and size. They are subtracted from the state's payment rate prior to reimbursing a child care provider.

Your collaboration with your subsidy partner may provide flexibility with the parent copay. Some states and counties have waived the copays. Please contact your CCDF lead agencies to have those conversations. Any other parent fees in excess of those that copay, such as late payment fees or late pickup fees, would be an unallowable charge. The parents of a child who lose their child care subsidy during the course of the program year could not be required to pay that parent fee for that portion of the year when no child care subsidy is paid, since that would also be a charge for participation in the Early Head Start program. I am going to turn this over to Kathie, and you can talk about attendance.

Kathie Boling: Thanks, Julie. That was a tremendous amount of great information for the selection process.

Julie's reminded us of how important the selection of children is to the stable enrollment of your program. Now let's take a look into the last letter of ERSEA, Attendance. The habits of regular child attendance are an important key to lifelong school success. It's so wonderful that the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership funding is not based on attendance. Although programs must monitor attendance and ensure 85 percent average daily attendance, Early Head Start funds can support the potential gap of funding concerning CCDF reimbursement when the child is absent for a number of days and is receiving the subsidy.

State CCDF lead agencies also have different attendance policies than Early Head Start. Enrollment-based programs pay the amount authorized on a certificate or a voucher, or as a contracted slot regardless of the child's absences or the days the program may be closed for holidays, special occasions. Attendance-based programs pay for actual hours attended. Most have CCDF policies that pay for a certain number of days that a child is absent.

CCDF payments vary regarding attendance. As an Early Head Start Child Care program, the child care provider should be paid based on the enrollment of the Early Head Start child, even if the state CCDF policies limit payments to attendance. The Partnership funds should be used to fill in this financial gap.

Once again, we've discussed earlier about ERSEA: Eligibility, the Authorization of care, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and now Attendance. It's all very important for you to have a good collaborative

relationship with your subsidy partner, and that you have some type of formal agreement in place to support the stable enrollment of your child care programs. Julie, we've made it through all of the elements of ERSEA.

Julie: Thank you, Kathie. And thank all of your for joining us. The selection criteria and the process of implementing is a critical step of the enrollment process. We hope we have provided further insight and some strategies to support your selection process. Kathie and I now look forward to chatting with you on a live chat format. Please type in your questions in the chat room on the right. We're looking forward to hearing from you. This is an opportunity to share your ideas or ask questions for suggestions from your fellow grantees. Thanks again.

Moderator: Thank you for participating in this Office Hour. Be sure to post your questions and comments in the chat room to the right to connect with your colleagues, as well as the content area experts.