



# ERSEA: Strategies During a Pandemic

Extended closures due to a pandemic can require programs to rethink their eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance (ERSEA) strategies. Programs may need to modify their recruitment and selection activities. Changing demographics may require eligibility criteria to evolve (e.g., increased numbers of eligible families, changes to recruitment and service areas). Programs also need to consider how to deliver and adapt services in an informed manner as this situation unfolds, including remote or modified service delivery models. This tip sheet can help guide ERSEA planning and service delivery during times of transition.

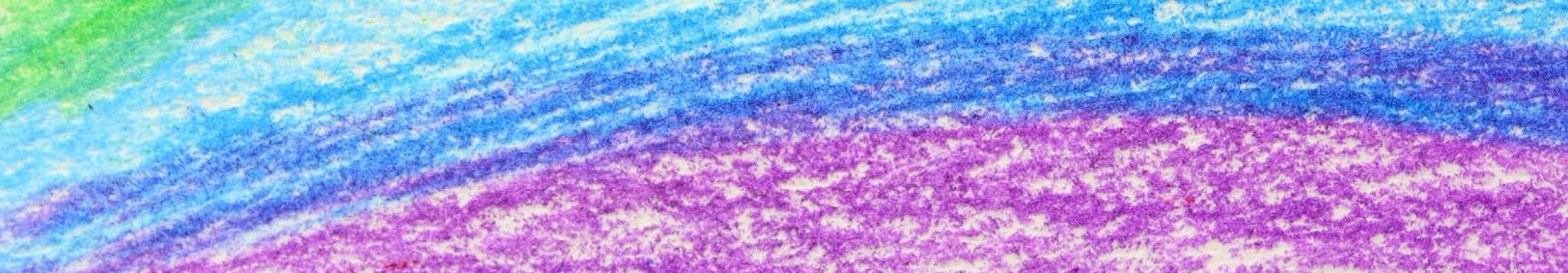
## ELIGIBILITY

During a pandemic, it is important to collect up-to-date information on local, state, and regional resources, needs, and demographic changes. These are critical to ensuring services continue in a responsive and efficient manner.

### Questions to consider:

- How will the program collect relevant data needed for planning and decision-making?
- How is relevant data communicated to program leadership (e.g., governing body, Policy Council, and management staff)?
- How is the pandemic impacting child care partnerships?
- Are there changes in the local or state subsidy system that impact eligibility?

In order to maximize access to services during a time of increased need, it is important that staff understand all of the avenues to eligibility. Families experiencing financial hardship may encounter unexpected living situations. Use the [McKinney Vento definition of homeless](#) for determining eligibility. Programs should also reference [ACF-IM-HS-19-03](#) regarding eligibility for children in kinship care.



## RECRUITMENT

Community-wide closures may impact normal recruitment activities. Consider making applications digital and sharing them via email, text, agency website, and social media. A shortened application with a telephone interview may be a more effective way to collect necessary information.

### Questions to consider:

- How can technology help programs connect with families and community partners?
- Are there other social media groups or agency web pages that can be used for recruitment? Consider offering a reciprocal arrangement with partners.
- Have you created a [MyPeers](#) group to discuss recruitment activities and other ERSEA services?
- How will the program monitor electronic recruitment efforts?

It may be necessary to expand recruitment efforts and target areas to accommodate increased numbers of eligible families. Be sure to constantly monitor community data in order to locate and recruit families with the greatest need. It's important to work in partnership with your Regional Office.

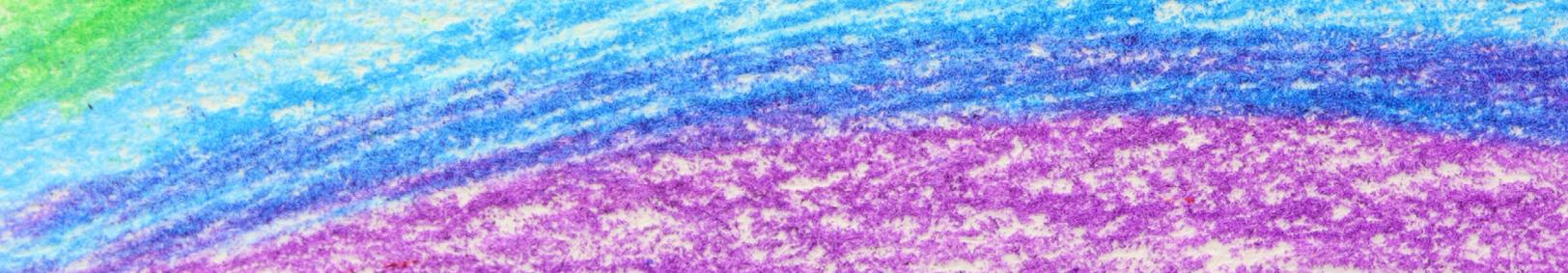
## SELECTION

The program's selection criteria may need to be modified to ensure children and families in most need are given priority.

### Questions to consider:

- How is program leadership involved in the development and approval of the selection criteria?
- Does the community assessment or annual update offer data that informs these decisions?
- How will leadership communicate changes in selection criteria and enrollment processes to related stakeholders?

Keep track of the latest Office of Head Start (OHS) guidance, Information Memoranda (IMs), and Program Instructions (PIs) to ensure the program has the necessary and relevant data to develop and adjust selection criteria. The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center offers a lot of useful information and resources.



## ENROLLMENT

Programs may want to conduct remote enrollment if they have the technological capabilities to accept applications and necessary verifications. Consider strategies for obtaining necessary enrollment documents electronically or by mail. When parent signatures cannot be obtained, be sure that staff sign a verification form indicating they have seen all required documentation.

### Questions to consider:

- Are procedures in place to accept income verification and other necessary documents?
- Have staff been trained on how to conduct remote enrollment?
- Have recordkeeping and data collection systems been adapted to support procedural changes?
- Is a system of oversight in place to ensure the integrity of the process?
- Is there a process for providing emergency resources to enrolled families and pregnant women?

Programs may want to conduct enrollment on a year-round basis to ensure a constant flow of applications. Stay informed of changes to child care subsidy regulations that may impact current programming or suggest new opportunities.

## ATTENDANCE

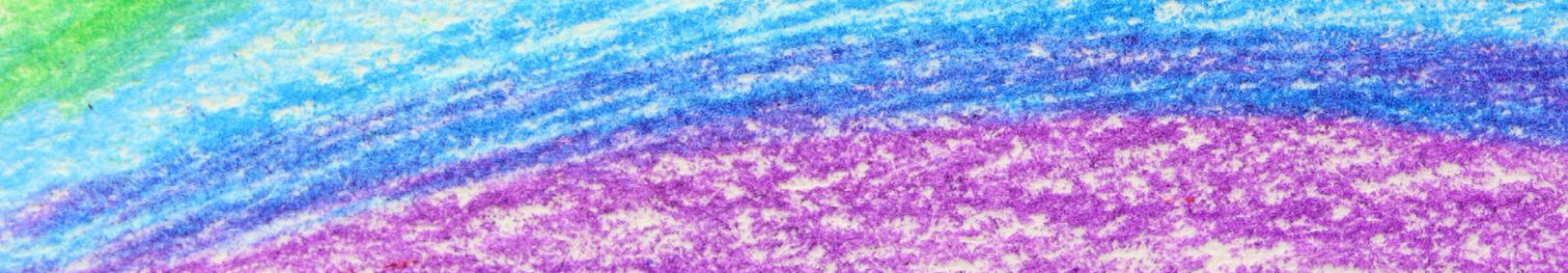
Attendance expectations may differ on a temporary basis as programs offer virtual and need-based services.

### Questions to consider:

- Has the program identified service and attendance expectations for this period of time?
- How will this be communicated to staff and families?
- Have attendance policies and recordkeeping systems been modified to include virtual interactions?
- How can the program support and encourage families' participation in remote services?

Monitor changes to the enrollment reporting process. It is important to capture data regarding changes in enrollment, reasons for drops, and participation in virtual events to monitor service delivery, measure outcomes, and plan for the future.

Challenging times often provide opportunities for innovation. It is important for leadership to have access to information from OHS and other credible sources (e.g., U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state, local, and tribal governments, and health organizations) to facilitate a calm and decisive response. Consistent communications and effective use of both human and material resources will result in quality services to children and families.



## RESOURCES

The program's selection criteria may need to be modified to ensure that children and families in most need are given priority.

[Full Enrollment Policy Questions and Answers \(Q&As\)](#)

ERSEA:

- [Prioritizing Eligibility and Meeting the Greatest Need](#)
- [Developing Effective Recruitment Strategies](#)
- [Thoughtful Selection Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Maintaining Full Enrollment](#)
- [Encouraging and Supporting Regular Attendance](#)

[ACF-IM-HS-19-03 Head Start and Early Head Start Eligibility for Children in Kinship Care](#)

[Community Assessment: The Foundation for Program Planning in Head Start](#)

[Child Care Aware® Coronavirus Resources](#)

[MyPeers](#) (ERSEA Managers – Coordinators Community)



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



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