



ERSEA: Thoughtful Selection Policies and Procedures

Your Head Start services must be designed to meet the unique needs of the community. It is important to ensure those families most in need receive services. These are fundamental concerns of Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA). Thoughtful selection policies and procedures ensure that children who would benefit most from Head Start services are identified and enrolled.

THE GOAL

Use your community assessment to establish selection criteria that prioritize children for enrollment. Prioritization must factor in family income, homelessness, children in foster care, age, and eligibility for special education or early intervention services.

Questions to consider

- Have you prioritized younger children where publicly funded pre-K is available?
- Have you reached out to families of children with disabilities and chronic health conditions?
- Have you prioritized children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care?
- Should you provide enrollment opportunities for children from diverse economic backgrounds?

Develop and maintain a waiting list that prioritizes children according to approved selection criteria. Test your selection criteria to ensure the validity of the process so the children most in need of services are given priority.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Careful planning and preparation ensures that you have the necessary data to develop and implement your selection criteria.

Questions to consider

- Does your community assessment process generate the data necessary to identify children most in need of services?
- Is your data collection system in place for tracking applications and other ERSEA information?
- Does your staff have the necessary data analysis skills and resources required for overall ERSEA management?

Review and revise selection criteria based on updates to the community assessment. Ensure there is a system in place to review and update application and enrollment forms. Ensure that all staff understand how to protect personally identifiable information. Implement procedures for communicating with parents to ensure timely exchange of information regarding application status, enrollment appointments, necessary enrollment documents, and waiting list status.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Engage the governing body and Policy Council in the development of selection criteria.

Questions to consider

- Does leadership understand the data in the community assessment and its implications for the selection of children?
- Does your program annually establish a selection criteria based on community needs data which includes consideration of prioritizing younger children?
- Have you trained leadership on applicable federal regulations?
- Does leadership recognize and support program policies and procedures?

Determining community strengths, needs, and resources is crucial to developing selection criteria that address identified needs and implementing responsive selection procedures.



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