 Child and Family Program Eligibility Rules

HSPPS: 1302.12(m) – A program must train all governing bodies, policy council, management, and staff who determine eligibility on applicable federal regulations and program policies and procedures.

The purpose of eligibility is to ensure that the neediest children and families benefit from Child and Family Program services first.

**Training Policy:**

* The program must train management and staff members who make eligibility determinations within 90 days of hiring new staff. Training will occur yearly, after the initial training, with optional opportunities during the year for support.
* The program must train all governing bodies, policy council, within 180 days of the beginning of the term of a new governing body or policy council member.

**Eligibility Requirements:**

• The family’s income is equal to or below 100% Federal Poverty Level (FPL); or,

• The family is currently receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Family Independence Program (FIP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); or,

• The child is determined McKinney-Vento; or,

• The child is in foster care/kinship care.

Additional allowances may be given to enroll a child over the 100% federal poverty level. 35% of enrolled children may be 101-130%, and 10% of enrolled children may be over income.

**Eligibility Information:**

* Eligibility interviews are conducted in person. Program staff may interview the family over the telephone if an in-person interview is not possible or convenient for the family.
* ERSEA Manager will verify all completed applications. Original application packets including income and documents that determine a family’s eligibility, are filed with the Data Management Team, and uploaded electronically into Child Plus.
* Families that have no income or who are unable to prove income can provide a written declaration of their eligibility. As a response to this written declaration, staff must make reasonable efforts to verify the family’s eligibility and to describe their current living situation.
* A Family Income Status/Staff Documentation form and a Third Party Documentation form are used as part of our eligibility verification process.

**Enrollment Priority Criteria:**

* NMCAA Child and Family Development Programs established an enrollment priority criteria to ensure the most neediest families are enrolled.

**Treating Families with Dignity and Respect:**

* Staff determining eligibility will follow NMCAA’s ***Cornerstones of Culture*** during an eligibility interview.

**N**urturing

**M**indful

**C**ompassionate

**A**ccountable

**A**ppreciative

**Disciplinary Action for Falsifying Documents**

* The Head Start/Early Head Start Eligibility Verification form signed by staff, states that knowingly falsifying documents and determining a child eligible for Head Start when the child does not meet the eligibility criteria can lead to criminal charges.
* NMCAA Personnel Policies state that staff who are dishonest (intentionally violate eligibility rules) are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination without prior warning or attempt at corrective discipline.
* As stated on the Early Childhood Programs of Northwest Michigan Client Intake, applicants certify that the information on the application is true. If any part is false, it is acknowledged that the applicant’s participation in the agency’s program may be terminated, and they may be subject to legal action.

1/23 EHS-HS Teams/admin/pro man/ERSEA/ Child and Family Program Eligibility Rules

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