



Dear Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program leaders,

All infants and toddlers served in Head Start programs, including those enrolled in Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs, remain eligible for the duration of their enrollment or until they turn 3 years old. This policy is consistent with the duration of eligibility determinations for all infants and toddlers served in Early Head Start. Specifically, the Head Start Program Performance Standards at [45 CFR §1302.12\(j\)\(2\)](#) state, “Children who are enrolled in a program receiving funds under the authority of section 645A of the Act remain eligible while they participate in the program.” This letter clarifies that this provision also applies to young children in MSHS programs.

Longstanding practice has been for MSHS programs to verify eligibility every two years, consistent with Head Start statute and regulations. However, MSHS programs serve children from birth to school age, and nearly half of the MSHS enrollment consists of children under the age of 3. The Office of Head Start (OHS) is clarifying this policy for MSHS programs to ensure consistency across programs, continuity of services for infants and toddlers, and reduced burden of eligibility verification for families and programs.

Eligibility duration requirements are as follows:

1. Children enrolled in a program will remain enrolled through the program year. Eligibility reverification does not allow programs to disenroll children during a program year.
2. Once a child under age 3 (infant or toddler) has been determined eligible for the MSHS program, they are eligible until they turn 3 or are no longer age-eligible for infant and toddler services, and transition to a preschool setting.
3. Once a preschool-aged child has been determined income-eligible for the MSHS program, they are eligible for that program year and the succeeding program year for up to two program years of preschool services before they age out of the program.
4. In instances 2 and 3 above, child income eligibility includes income at or below the federal poverty guideline, agricultural work as the primary source of income, and status as migrant or seasonal farmworker. These conditions will not need to be reverified before the child turns 3 or during the eligibility period for preschool services.

For example: A child that becomes eligible for MSHS infant and toddler services at 4

months of age will have eligibility reverified when transitioning to preschool services at age 3. Therefore, the child's eligibility will be verified twice in a five-year period.

MSHS programs should work with their Policy Council and governing boards to ensure policies and procedures reflect this clarifying information. Please direct any questions to the Region XII Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Office.

/ Tala Hooban /

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