

ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: Income Eligibility for Enrollment in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

INSTRUCTION:

Head Start programs are required to verify family income before determining a child is eligible to participate in the program. The requirements that pertain to income eligibility are found in 45 CFR 1305.4 (c), (d) and (e). Head Start employees must complete two actions when verifying family income. First, a Head Start employee must examine individual Income Tax Form 1040, W-2 forms, pay stubs, written statements from employers, or documentation showing current status of recipients of public assistance. By examination of these documents, the Head Start employee will be able to calculate the family's annual income and determine if the child is eligible to participate. In order to complete income verification for each child, the Head Start employee must verify the size of the family as defined in 45 CFR 1305.2 (e)(1)(2) and have a copy of the most current Federal Poverty Guidelines.

The second action requires that the Head Start employee, who examines the documents and makes a determination of eligibility, must sign a statement attesting to their review of the specific documents and to the determination that the child is eligible to participate based on family income. In June of 2009, the Office of Head Start (OHS) created an eligibility verification form as a useful tool to assist programs in completing the second step in income verification. OHS made improvements to the Head Start Eligibility Verification form and it has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget [OMB: 0970-0374] and is available on [Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center \(ELCKC\)](#).

Although use of the Head Start Eligibility Verification form is not required, OHS strongly encourages programs to use it. It will guide employees, who are verifying income documentation, to properly document the grounds for income eligibility determinations. Please remember that completion of a signed income verification form is required before a child is accepted and must be retained as part of the child's official record.

Currently programs are not required to maintain copies of the documents reviewed to determine income eligibility; however, OHS encourages programs to maintain copies of the eligibility documents with the eligibility verification form in the child's official record. Programs should provide annual training to employees responsible for determining and verifying income eligibility and to ensure that those employees are fully aware of the consequences established by the grantee for employees who knowingly sign a verification form that contains false information.

If OHS determines that a grantee has contributed to the misrepresentation or falsification of family income, OHS will issue a notice of deficiency and take other adverse actions.

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