


City of Albuquerque / Early Head Start  
Program Operations

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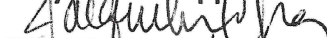
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**45 CFR Chapter XIII**

**Component:** Program Operations

Subpart A – Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance  
HSPPS 1302.10 – 1302.18

**Subject:** Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance

I. Service and Enrollment Area: (1302.11)

1. The City of Albuquerque (COA) Early Head Start (EHS) service area is Bernalillo County, Albuquerque, New Mexico. The funded enrollment is 204 slots. A family must reside within the service area to be considered eligible for enrollment.
2. Community Assessment will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure the program meets community needs and builds on strengths and resources.

II. Eligibility: (1302.12)

1. The COA EHS program serves families where the mother is either pregnant or there are children between the ages 0-3. Families must complete an Intake Application and provide income data and proof of birth.

A pregnant woman or a child is eligible if:

- The family's income is equal to or below the poverty line; or,
- The family is eligible for or, in the absence of child care, would be potentially eligible for public assistance; including TANF child-only payments, or,
- The child is homeless, as defined in part 1305; or,
- The child is in foster care.

2. Verification of income and proof of birth will be secured and documented at the time of the Intake Application:

All COA EHS applications are accompanied by one or more of the following items of verification for the relevant twelve (12) month period (Head Start Act 2007 Section 645):

- Individual Tax Form 1040
- W-2
- Pay Stubs
- Written Statements from Employers
- TANF Documentation
- Unemployment
- Foster Care Reimbursement
- SSI Documentation
- Documentation of No Income

3. The COA EHS is designed to serve low-income families. Only thirty-five (35) percent of the children served may be in between a hundred (100) and a hundred thirty (130) percent of the federal poverty level. If the family does not meet the income guidelines, the program may enroll a child who would benefit from services, provided that these participants only make up to 10 percent of the program's current enrollment.
4. If a child is determined eligible to participate in the COA EHS program, he or she will remain eligible until the child reaches his/her third birthday.
5. COA EHS will keep eligibility determination records for each participant for the current year and three (3) preceding years; including ongoing records of the eligibility training for staff. COA EHS may keep these records electronically.
  - a. Each eligibility determination record must include:
    1. Copies of any documents or statements, including declarations that are deemed necessary to verify eligibility.
    2. A statement that program staff has made reasonable efforts to verify information by:
      - Conducting either an in-person, or a telephone interview with the family.
      - Describing efforts made to verify eligibility and collecting documents required for third party verification that includes the family's written consent to contact each third party, the third parties' names, titles, and affiliations, and information from third parties regarding the family's eligibility.
6. COA EHS will take all necessary actions against staff who intentionally violate federal and program eligibility determination regulations and who knowingly enroll pregnant

women and children that are not eligible to receive COA EHS services. Any action taken will be in accordance to the City of Albuquerque Personnel Rules and Regulations.

### III. Recruitment Process: (1302.13)

1. All COA EHS staff will be responsible for recruitment of eligible families.
2. Recruitment and enrollment efforts are on-going year round.
3. Recruitment efforts will actively inform all families within the service area of the availability of COA EHS services by advertising via media, Public Service Announcements, parents informing and recruiting other parents, updating information on re-entries, (expectant moms) during home visits by both teaching staff and home visitors, distributing flyers, posters, leaflets etc. through the service area, i.e. Albuquerque Public Schools, City Recreation sites, social services agencies serving families with children, health clinics, community events, etc. All flyers will reflect the language and ethnicity of the population served by the COA EHS.
4. In addition to the methods listed above, active recruitment of children with disabilities shall occur by partnering with Early Intervention agencies, health care providers, and other organizations serving children with special needs.

### IV. Selection Process: (1302.14)

1. COA EHS families are placed on the waiting list according to need and program option desired. The COA EHS ERSEA committee will annually establish selection criteria that weigh the prioritization of selection of participants, based on community needs identified in the community needs assessment as described in §1302.11(b), and including family income, whether the child is homeless, whether the child is in foster care, the child's age, whether the child is eligible for special education and related services, or early intervention services, as appropriate, as determined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1400 *et seq.*) and, other relevant family or child risk factors.
  - a. A minimum of ten (10) percent of funded enrollment slots will be filled by children with a diagnosed disability. In addition to the methods listed above, active recruitment of children with disabilities will occur through (but not limited to): contact with agencies serving children with disabilities and arrangements made where feasible for coordination and shared services if it is within the best interest of the child.
  - b. The Disabilities Coordinator along with the Early Head Start Education Specialist will determine placement of children with disabilities into COA EHS.



- c. The COA EHS will develop at the beginning of each enrollment year and maintain during the year a waiting list that prioritizes children according to the program's selection criteria.

V. Enrollment and Re-enrollment: (1302.15)

1. COA EHS will maintain its funded enrollment level and fill any vacancy as soon as possible and will fill any vacancy within thirty (30) days.
2. COA EHS serves homeless children or children in foster care, and will make efforts to maintain the child's enrollment regardless of whether the family or child moves to a different service area, or transition the child to a program in a different service area, as required in §1302.72(a), according to the family's needs.
3. If COA EHS determines from the community assessment that there are families experiencing homelessness in the area, or children in foster care that could benefit from services, the program may reserve one or more enrollment slots for pregnant women and children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care, when a vacancy occurs. No more than three percent of a program's funded enrollment slots may be reserved. If the reserved enrollment slot is not filled within 30 days, the enrollment slot becomes vacant and then must be filled within thirty (30) days.
4. COA EHS will comply with state immunization enrollment and attendance requirements, with the exception of homeless children as described in §1302.16(c)(1).
5. Parent participation in the COA EHS activities is voluntary, including consent for data sharing. Although parent participation is voluntary and is not required as a condition of the child's enrollment, it is strongly encouraged in promotion of school readiness.
6. Intake Applications for COA EHS are taken on an on-going basis throughout the year and are valid for twelve (12) months.
7. An Intake Application will be completed for each child and staff will be trained on the Intake Application process. Where indicated, translators will be available during the time of intake. If a family is homebound, a home visit will be made to take the application. Families will receive assistance to obtain the needed documentation required for application and enrollment, as needed.
8. The Intake Coordinator will review and ensure that all the information on the application is accurate and complete. All applications are entered into the COA EHS data management system by the Intake Coordinator. After a child is determined to be eligible, the Intake Coordinator will sign the completed Eligibility Verification Form indicating that they have examined the family income documentation and verify that the child is eligible to participate in the program. All pertinent documentation is



attached to the Eligibility Verification Form and submitted to the Early Head Start Director for final approval.

9. Applications are forwarded to the Early Head Start Director for final review and approval. The Early Head Start Director's signature indicates that the application is complete and that the child's application has been approved for placement on the waiting list.
10. All children are placed on a waiting list according to selection criteria. The Intake Coordinator is responsible for placement of children according to established priorities and selection criteria for home based and center based options.
11. The Intake Coordinator and the Early Head Start Director will have the final responsibility for placement of approved children. All approved enrollments will be entered into the COA EHS data management system by the Intake Coordinator and maintained by the Data Manager.
12. Staff wishing to enroll their children and/or grandchildren in COA EHS must follow the established eligibility criteria for participation in the program. Due to potential conflict of interest, children enrolled in the program who may be related to staff cannot receive services from that staff member.
13. A child will be officially enrolled in the program only after the application has been completed, the applicant has been determined eligible, and it is determined through the eligibility process that they have the highest selection criteria to fill the vacant slot. An applicant may be enrolled when a parent has been contacted and informed that Early Head Start services are available to that child. An Initial Health Screening will be scheduled within 45 days of enrollment for the home based option. If a child is entering the center based option, the family has up to five (5) working days to begin in the center and must have the child's Initial Health Screening and current immunizations completed prior to the child's first day of attendance. On the fifth day after enrollment, if the family/child has not shown up to begin services the teaching staff will contact the Intake Coordinator and Education Specialist to follow up with the family. If the family still wishes to participate, a plan will be developed to continue enrollment or if not, the child will be dis-enrolled from the program.

#### VI. Attendance: (1302.16)

1. COA EHS will ensure children are safe when they do not arrive at school. If a child is unexpectedly absent and a parent has not contacted the program within one hour of program start time, the teaching staff will attempt to contact the parent to ensure the child's well-being.

2. The COA EHS will promote attendance by:
  - a. Providing information about the benefits of regular attendance;
  - b. Supporting families to promote the child's regular attendance;
  - c. Conducting a home visit or making other direct contact with a child's parents if a child has multiple unexplained absences (such as two consecutive unexplained absences); and,
  - d. Using individual child attendance data on a monthly basis to identify children with patterns of absence that put them at risk of missing ten (10) percent of program days per year and developing appropriate strategies to improve individual attendance among identified children, such as direct contact with parents or intensive case management, as necessary.
3. If a child ceases to attend, the program will make appropriate efforts to reengage the family to resume attendance as described above. In cases where chronic absenteeism interferes with the child's ability to benefit from the program, the family receives written notice of intent to dis-enroll. The family then has two (2) weeks to respond. If the child's attendance does not resume, then the program will consider that slot vacant. This action is not considered expulsion as described in §1302.17.
4. The COA EHS teaching staff will enter attendance and reasons for absences into the data management system on a regular basis. An absence will be considered unexcused if the parent does not provide a reason for the absence. The attendance data will be analyzed on a monthly basis and if the monthly average daily attendance rate falls below 85 percent, the program will analyze the causes of absenteeism to identify any systematic issues that contribute to the program's absentee rate. The program will use this data to make necessary changes in a timely manner as part of ongoing oversight and correction as described in §1302.102(b) and inform its continuous improvement efforts as described in §1302.102(c).
5. When COA EHS determines a child is eligible under §1302.12(c)(1)(iii) (Homeless Children), the child will be allowed to attend for up to 90 days or as long as allowed under state licensing requirements, without immunization and other records, to give the family reasonable time to present these documents. COA EHS staff will work with families to get children immunized as soon as possible in order to comply with state licensing requirements. If a child experiencing homelessness is unable to attend classes regularly because the family does not have transportation to and from the program facility, the COA EHS program will utilize community resources to address transportation challenges.

## VII. Suspension and Expulsion: (1302.17)

1. The COA EHS will prohibit or severely limit the use of suspension due to a child's behavior. Such suspensions may only be temporary in nature.
2. A temporary suspension may be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications.
3. Before COA EHS determines whether a temporary suspension is necessary, the program will engage with a mental health consultant, collaborate with the parents, and utilize appropriate community resources – such as behavior coaches, psychologists, other appropriate specialists, or other resources – as needed, to determine no other reasonable option is appropriate.
4. If a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, COA EHS will help the child return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensuring child safety by:
  - a. Continuing to engage with the parents and a mental health consultant, and continuing to utilize appropriate community resources;
  - b. Developing a written plan to document the action and supports needed;
  - c. Providing services that include home visits; and,
  - d. Determining whether a referral to a local agency responsible for implementing IDEA is appropriate.
5. COA EHS cannot expel or dis-enroll a child from Early Head Start because of a child's behavior.
6. When a child exhibits persistent and serious challenging behaviors, COA EHS will explore all possible steps and document all steps taken to address such issues, and facilitate the child's safe participation in the program. Such steps must include, at a minimum, engaging a mental health consultant, considering the appropriateness of providing appropriate services and supports under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the child who satisfies the definition of disability in 29 U.S.C. §705(9)(b) of the Rehabilitation Act is not excluded from the program on the basis of disability, and consulting with the parents and the child's teacher, and:
  - a. If the child has an individualized family service plan (IFSP), COA EHS will consult with the agency responsible for the IFSP to ensure the child receives the needed support services; or,
  - b. If the child does not have an IFSP, COA EHS will collaborate, with parental consent, with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to determine the child's eligibility for services.
7. If, after COA EHS has explored all possible steps and documented all steps taken as described above, COA EHS, in consultation with the parents, the child's teacher, the



agency responsible for implementing IDEA (if applicable), and the mental health consultant, determines that the child's continued enrollment presents a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children and determines COA EHS is not the most appropriate placement for the child, COA EHS will work with such entities to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.

VIII: Fees: (1302.18)

1. COA EHS will never charge eligible families a fee to participate in Head Start, including special events such as field trips, and will not in any way condition an eligible child's enrollment or participation in the program upon the payment of a fee.
2. COA EHS can accept a fee from families of enrolled children for services that are in addition to services funded by Early Head Start, such as child care before or after funded Early Head Start hours. COA EHS will not condition an Early Head Start child's enrollment on the ability to pay a fee for additional hours.